

## CHAPTER 3

# ĀGHĀ MUḤAMMAD KHĀN AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE QĀJĀR DYNASTY

## THE EMERGENCE OF THE QĀJĀRS

The preceding chapter described the unsuccessful attempt by a small tribal confederation in south-west Iran, led by the Zands, to establish control over the other tribal groupings on the Iranian plateau. Its failure was due to the limited number of fighting men whom the Zands and their confederates could muster for sustained campaigning; the family rivalries and divisions of the ruling house after Karīm Khān Zand's death in 1193/1779; the superior military resources of the Qājārs; and not least, the single-minded ambition of their ultimate nemesis, Āghā Muḥammad Khān Qājār. In this chapter, his career will be placed within the context of the rise of the Qājārs, one of the original components of the Safavids' Qizilbāsh confederacy. For Āghā Muḥammad Khān's bid for overall kingship, the disturbed condition of late 18th-century Iran proved particularly favourable.

As for the Qājārs' early history, there is a late tradition that they were part of the Turkish Oghuz confederacy, and first entered Iran with other Oghuz tribes in the 11th century. However, neither of the surviving lists of Oghuz tribes, those of Maḥmūd Kashgharī and Rashīd al-Dīn, include them, although both mention the Afshārs. Conceivably, they were an element in a larger tribe (the Bayāts have been suggested as the most likely), from which they later broke away. The same late tradition claims an eponymous ancestor for the tribe in Qājār Noyan, the son of a Mongol, Sartuq Noyan, who was supposed to be *Atābeg* to the Īl-Khān Arghūn. Qājār Noyan was also alleged to be an ancestor of Tīmūr.

If credibility is accorded to such references, early Qājār history might hypothetically be reconstructed as follows: with the break-up of the Īl-Khanate, following the death of Abū Sa'īd in 736/1335, the Qājārs, already an independent tribe, moved westwards in the direction of Syria or Anatolia, perhaps into the country around Diyarbakr or Erilat. Later, during the 15th century, possibly during the reign of the Āq Qūyūnlū ruler, Uzun Ḥasan (857–82/1453–78), or that of Ya'qūb (883–96/1478–90), the Qājārs established themselves in

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Map 2. Iran during the lifetime of Āghā Muḥammad Khān Qājār

Āzarbāijān and, from that time, became associated with the area of Erivan, Ganja and Qarābāgh. Presumably, it was also during the Āq Qūyūnlū ascendancy that the Qājārs, like other Oghuz tribes in Āzarbāijān and eastern Anatolia, fell under the influence of Ithnā-‘Asharī (Twelver) Shī‘ism, and became *murīds* (disciples) of the Shaikhs of Ardabīl. All this, it should be emphasized, is hypothesis.<sup>1</sup>

With the rise of the Safavids, the Qājārs begin to assume historical visibility. A contingent of them was among the 7,000 tribesmen who accompanied the

<sup>1</sup> See Sümer, “Bayat”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., I, p. 1117; Sümer, “Kādījār”, *idem*, IV, p. 387; Lambton, “Kādījār”, *idem*, IV, p. 387ff. Also Reid, *Tribalism*, and Sümer, *Öğuzlar*. Indicative of the opprobrium attached to the Qājār name during the 19th century was the rumour that linked their origins with Damascus and their ancestors with the army of the execrated Yazīd. Morier, “Account”, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* VII, p. 231.

future Shāh Ismāʿīl on his triumphant march from Arzinjān to Shīrvān in 906/1500–1,<sup>2</sup> and thereafter, they were a conspicuous element of the Qizilbāsh confederacy. For the remainder of the 16th century, there were few major events in which one or more Qājār amīrs did not play a part, although, in terms of numbers, the Qājārs were among the less prominent Qizilbāsh tribes.

Probably during the Safavid period, the well-established division between the two rival branches of the Yūkhārī-bāsh and the Ashāqa-bāsh Qājārs emerged, each further sub-divided into the clans of the Qūyūnlū, Develū, Izz al-Dīnlū, Ziyādlū, etc. The Qūyūnlū clan of the Ashāqa-bāsh branch provided the ruling dynasty of Iran from the late 18th to the early 20th century, while their erstwhile rivals, the Develū clan of the Yūkhārī-bāsh branch, provided many of the functionaries and military commanders of the kingdom.

Tradition has it that, partly because he mistrusted their growing power, and partly to strengthen his north-eastern frontier against the Uzbeks and Türkmens, Shāh ʿAbbās I divided the Qājār tribe, by relocating a large number of them in northern Khurāsān and Gurgān with other Qizilbāsh and Kurdish tribes. The majority were apparently settled in or around Astarābād, although Āq Qalʿa on the river Gurgān was originally their principal habitat.<sup>3</sup> In Gurgān they shared the province with the indigenous Iranian and long-settled Arab population, as well as with other tribal groups, principally Jalāyirids and Bayāts. In Khurāsān they were to be found in Sabzavār and Turshīz, in Chahcha and Mekhne between Kalāt and Sarakhs, and most importantly, in Marv, where they shared the oasis with a mixed Iranian, Arab and Tatar population, and constituted the front line of defence against the Uzbeks.

From the time of this division, the Qājārs in the Erivan, Ganja and Qarābāgh region gradually disappeared, absorbed by new tribal groups. Those in Marv survived the arrival into the area of the Yamūt Türkmens, and also the repeated interventions of Nādir Shāh into the affairs of the oasis, but finally succumbed about 1200/1785 to the raids of Shāh Murād, the Mangit Khān of Bukhārā. Thus only the Qājārs of Gurgān proved strong and numerous enough to retain their identity during the upheavals following the break-up of the Safavid kingdom and the tumultuous years of Nādir Shāh's rule. They no doubt benefitted from their isolated location, enjoying limited protection from the north-east by the Qara-Qum desert, and from the south-west by the swamps and forests of

<sup>2</sup> Hasan-i Rūmlū, *Chronicle*, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Rizā Qulī Khān, *Relation*, p. 29; Fraser, *Narrative*, p. 620; Rabino, *Mazandaran*, p. 86. According to Rizā Qulī Khān, Āq Qalʿa (Mubārakābād) was divided into two quarters to keep the Yūkhārī-bāsh and Ashāqa-bāsh apart; *op. cit.*, p. 38.

Māzandarān and the sweep of the Alburz range. Yet their location was not so remote that they could not easily strike in the direction of Tehran via Sārī and Firūzkūh, into Rasht along the coast, into Qūmis (the Simnān-Damghan-Shāhrud area) via Ribāṭ-i Safīd and Bisṭām, or into Khurāsān by way of Khabūshān (Qūchān), while the wastes of the Qara-Qum never prevented regular contact with the region of the lower Āmū-Daryā (Oxus), and provided a refuge in times of crisis. The Qājārs maintained a relationship with the Yamūt, Göklen, and other Türkmen tribes of the Qara-Qum, in which trade, occasional raiding and outright hostilities, marriage and military alliances all played a part.<sup>4</sup> As “lords of the marches” in the zone between Türkmen nomadic pastoralism and Iranian sedentary agriculture, the Qājārs maintained an uneasy balance between the traditions of the Iranian plateau and those of the steppes.

Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān, the founder of the fortunes of the Ashāqa-bāsh Qājārs of Astarābād in the 18th century, was the son of a certain Shāh Qulī Khān of the Qūyūnlū Qājārs of Ganja. He had made his way to Gurgān and married into the Qūyūnlū Qājārs of Astarābād. The date of Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān’s birth is given variously, ranging from 1097/1685–6 to 1104/1692–3. Before the Ghilzai invasion of Iran, he was reputed to be a military commander of some consequence, and had once served as *ḥākim* of Mashhad. In 1133–4/1720 he had been ordered to assist an incompetent royal commander in the pacification of Khurāsān, but was worsted in battle by Malik Maḥmūd Sīstānī and withdrew to his base in Astarābād. The Afghan siege of Iṣfahān in 1134–35/1721–2 may have brought him out of his retreat,<sup>5</sup> but Ṭahmāsp’s subsequent flight from the capital offered Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān Qājār an opening to prove his loyalty to the Safavids. Ṭahmāsp reached the vicinity of Tehran. According to Father Krusinski, the Safavid forces, on turning back towards Qum to face the pursuing Afghans, included some Qājār tribesmen, described as “hardy and trusty Fellows, of approv’d Fidelity”.<sup>6</sup> Ṭahmāsp, short of men and at that time lacking potential allies, needed the 9,000 fighting men whom, according to Krusinski, the Qājārs of Astarābād could muster. Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān was rewarded with the appointment of

<sup>4</sup> Marriage alliances between the Qājārs and Türkmens of the Qara-Qum were by no means uncommon, as in the case of Bahrām ‘Alī Khān of Marv, whose mother was a Salor and whose father was a Qājār. See Bukhārī, *Histoire*, p. 58. The vendettas and alliances between the Qājārs and the Türkmens were a permanent feature of this period.

<sup>5</sup> See p. 14 *supra* and Krusinski, *History* II, p. 79. Lockhart rejects the tradition preserved in the Qājār chronicles, of how Faṭḥ ‘Alī Khān and his followers had previously made their way to Iṣfahān during the course of the Ghilzai siege and offered their services to Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusain; here allegedly, the Qājār chieftain became an object of jealousy at the Safavid court, and eventually withdrew in disgust. Lockhart, *The Fall of the Ṣafavī Dynasty*, p. 280. Cf. Lambton, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> Krusinski, *op. cit.* II, p. 175.



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*Iʿtimād al-Daula* to Ṭahmāsp, of whose entourage he thus became the leading member. By joining the Safavid fugitive, he acquired a position which could be exploited at the appropriate time. Moreover, Ṭahmāsp's fortunes appeared to be improving. Russian interest in the Caspian provinces had receded after Peter the Great's death in 1725. Ashraf the Afghan was embroiled with the Ottomans and was cut off from the Ghilzai base at Qandahar. The Abdālīs in Herat were preoccupied with their own quarrels. The nearest and least formidable enemy was Malik Maḥmūd Sīstānī, striving to be master of Khurāsān. To campaign against Malik Maḥmūd, Ṭahmāsp accompanied Fath ʿAlī Khān to Astarābād to collect more troops. The Qājār chieftain became a mainstay to Ṭahmāsp and was appointed his *Vakīl al-Daula*, while other Qājār chieftains were granted lesser titles (Dhu'l-Qaʿda 1138/July 1726).

The grant of the title and office of *Vakīl al-Daula* confirmed that Fath ʿAlī Khān was the real power in Ṭahmāsp's camp and set a precedent followed on several later occasions: Nādir Khān Afshār adopted the same title in 1144-45/1732, when he replaced Ṭahmāsp with the eight-month-old ʿAbbās III; ʿAlī Mardān Khān Bakhtiyārī assumed it in 1163-4/1750 on behalf of Ismāʿīl III; and Karīm Khān Zand likewise, on behalf of the same figure-head a year later.

The Safavid Shah and his Qājār supporters set off to capture Mashhad from Malik Maḥmūd Sīstānī, but at Khabūshān Ṭahmāsp Qulī Khān (later Nādir Shāh) joined them with a small force of Afshārs and Kurds. By the time the army resumed its march towards Mashhad, this newcomer had completely ingratiated himself with Ṭahmāsp. When they came within sight of the city, the rivalry between Fath ʿAlī Khān and Ṭahmāsp Qulī Khān was approaching its climax. The circumstances of Fath ʿAlī Khān's fall remain obscure; he was murdered on 14 Ṣafar 1139/11 October 1726. It is possible that Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān Develū of the Yūkhārī-bāsh Qājārs of Astarābād was implicated in these events; from this time onwards he became the most prominent figure in the Gurgān region.

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Fath ʿAlī Khān's death left his troops in the Safavid service. They continued to serve Shāh Ṭahmāsp, and after his overthrow, Nādir Shāh. Leadership of the Qājārs now shifted from the Qūyūnlū clan of the Ashāqa-bāsh branch, to the Develū clan of the Yūkhārī-bāsh. The late Fath ʿAlī Khān had apparently failed to consolidate his leadership over all the Astarābād Qājārs. Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān Develū, who had joined Ṭahmāsp Qulī Khān (later Nādir Shāh), pros-

pered in his service and was rewarded with the rank of *beglerbegī* of Astarābād. Subsequently, however, Nādir Shāh ceased to trust MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān and on one occasion ordered him to dismantle a fort which he had erected in Astarābād. MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān transferred his loyalty to Nādir's son, Rizā Qulī, and during Nādir's absence in India, when rumours of his death reached Iran, MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān persuaded Rizā Qulī to murder the captive Ṭahmāsp and his two sons, ʿAbbās and Ismāʿīl, in prison in Sabzavār. The Qājār chieftain himself carried out the deed, with conspicuous brutality, probably in the latter part of Dhu'l-Qa'da 1152/February 1740. Following the attempt on Nādir Shāh's life in Ṣafar-Rabīʿ I 1154/May 1741, interrogation of the attacker implicated MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān, as well as Rizā Qulī. However, the former survived, perhaps because he combined the office of *beglerbegī* of Astarābād with that of leader of the Qājār contingent in Nādir's army. MuḤammad Zamān Khān, his son, acted as his deputy in Astarābād when he was absent with Nādir's forces. He lived to be a leader in the conspiracy which resulted in Nādir Shāh's assassination (1160/1747).

Meanwhile, Fath ʿAlī Khān's surviving son, MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān, had become a rival to MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān. He later proved himself a courageous and resourceful leader, but in his youth lacked sufficient manpower to challenge the prevailing Develū hegemony in Astarābād. Thus he spent his early years as a fugitive, protected by the Yamūt Türkmens, who pursued a policy of "*divide et impera*" towards their Qājār neighbours. It is certain that, at the time of the birth of MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān's eldest son, MuḤammad (7 MuḤarram 1155/14 March 1742), he himself was in hiding in the Qara-Qum desert and the child's mother, also of the Qūyūnlū clan, was concealed in the house of Āghā Sayyid MuḤīd in Astarābād, where the future Shah was brought up as the son of the *sayyid*.

Some two years after this, MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān launched an attack on Astarābād, presumably directed as much against his Develū rival as against Nādir Shāh. A further inducement was the presence of part of the royal treasure in Astarābād. There is no reason to suppose that the attack was not long planned, since MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān had contacted the Safavid pretender, Sām Mīrzā. According to the English merchant, Jonas Hanway, the attack occurred on the 30 Dhu'l-Qa'da 1156/15 January 1744, only a few days after MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān had been in the city, presumably for reconnaissance purposes and to enlist supporters among the entourage of the ḥākīm, MuḤammad Zamān Khān, son of the *beglerbegī*, MuḤammad Ḥusain Khān, then absent from the province.

Aided by 2,000 Qājār and other tribal supporters, and 1,000 Yamūt auxiliaries, Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān made an easy conquest. Muḥammad Zamān Khān fled, and Astarābād passed without a fight into Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān's possession. Thereafter, however, disaster struck. The Safavid pretender had been captured even before the uprising took place; approaches to the beglerbegī of neighbouring Māzandarān, made on the strength of earlier exchanges, were now rejected; and having acquired a share of the plunder of Astarābād, the Yamūt chieftains lost interest in the enterprise, although not before a quarrel had broken out over division of the spoils.

Meanwhile, Nādir Shāh had ordered Bihbūd Khān, *sardār* of the Atak, to take the field; he marched on Astarābād and defeated Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān several stages to the east of the city. Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān fled into the Qara-Qum. Bihbūd Khān entered Astarābād where, joined by Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān Develū, he loosed a reign of terror on the Ashāqa-bāsh Qājārs and their alleged supporters. Hanway records seeing two pyramids of skulls, one consisting of Bihbūd Khān's victims, and the other of Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān's, near the entrance to the city. If Muḥammad and his mother were still in concealment in Āghā Sayyid Mufid's house, they were lucky that their presence was not discovered.

Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān accompanied his Yamūt allies, recently driven out of Khwārazm into Manqishlaq, in an attack upon the ruler of Khiva, Abu'l-Ghāzī Khān, who was, as his father, Īlbārs Khān, had been, a client of Nādir Shāh. In addition, Khiva was threatened by an uprising of the Salor Türkmens. Abu'l-Ghāzī Khān appealed to Nādir Shāh for aid. Nādir Shāh ordered his nephew, 'Alī Qulī Khān (the future 'Ādil Shāh), ḥākim of Mashhad, and Bihbūd Khān, *sardār* of the Atak, to assist the Khān of Khiva, and once again Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān found himself fighting along side the Yamūt against his late father's Afsharid foes. The feud between the Qūyūnlū Qājārs and the Afsharids, as well as with the Develū Qājārs and, later, the Zands, helps to explain the conduct of Aghā Muḥammad Khān at a later period. In one encounter, Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān fought Bihbūd Khān single-handed and wounded him, but he and his Türkmens allies were finally defeated and forced to flee into the Qara-Qum desert, where Nādir Shāh's troops sought them in vain.

Following Nādir Shāh's assassination in 1160/1747, Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān again tried to seize Astarābād. He was again assisted by the Yamūt, led by their chieftain, Bekenj Khān, and later by the Göklen. This revolt was suppressed by Nādir Shāh's nephew, 'Alī Qulī Khān, now reigning as 'Ādil Shāh, who, having learnt of the existence of Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān's son, Muḥammad, then about six years old and still living in Astarābād, ordered him

to be brought to Mashhad. He apparently intended to kill the boy, but was prevailed upon to spare his life and castrate him instead; hence, the later sobriquet of *Āghā* (eunuch). Soon after ʿĀdil Shāh's death (1161/1748), Āghā MuḤammad was restored to his family and, for the next ten years, shared his father's adventurous life. During this period MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān made a determined effort to become ruler of all Iran.

This ambition was not unrealistic for a tribal chieftain who had already established a reputation for determination and courage. The descendants of Nādir Shāh were weakened by mutual rivalries. In the east, the Abdālī Afghans of Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī (1160-87/1747-73) were nominally in possession of Khurāsān, but looked towards the Indus as a natural area for expansion. In the west, the situation was in flux. Iṣfahān was dominated by ʿAlī Mardān Khān and his Bakhtiyārīs. In Fārs and Luristān, Karīm Khān Zand had a formidable tribal following. In Āzarbāijān, the Afghan adventurer, Āzād Khān, seemed secure and able to expand his territory. MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān consolidated his grip upon Gurgān and Māzandarān, extended his suzerainty into Gīlān, and then, in 1164/1751, struck out to relieve ʿAlī Mardān Khān's forces in Kirmānshāh, which were besieged by Karīm Khān Zand. News of ʿAlī Mardān Khān's defeat led MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān to withdraw rapidly towards Astarābād, pursued by Karīm Khān Zand, who besieged the city (1165/1751-2). Eventually, MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān, assisted by his Yamūt allies, led Karīm Khān's forces into an ambush; the Zands withdrew to Tehran, leaving the Safavid puppet, Ismāʿīl III, a pawn in MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān's hands. MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān then set about the recovery of Māzandarān and Gīlān, where the local rulers had abandoned his cause as soon as his fortunes appeared to be ebbing.

In Gīlān, MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān showed his determination to bring order to the region. He found the province particularly torn by a feud between the rulers of Shaft and Fūmin, the former supported by another local ruler, Mīrzā Zakī of Gaskar. Since the Shaft-Gaskar faction was in the ascendant, he supported the Fūmin faction in the person of the young Hidāyat-Allāh Khān, whom he appointed governor, although with his own representative to assist him. After the death of MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān in 1172/1759, Hidāyat-Allāh Khān renounced his Qājār allegiance and submitted to Karīm Khān Zand, who confirmed his appointment, but left him to his own devices. He maintained a refined court in Rasht, financed by the silk industry and the sea trade between Enzeli and Astrakhan. However, he was treacherous and bloodthirsty, even by the standards of the age, and his eventual overthrow by MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān's son and political heir, Āghā MuḤammad Khān, passed unmourned.

In 1168/1755, MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān added to his growing reputation by

defeating an Abdālī army near Sabzavār. Then in 1169/1756, he advanced towards Iṣfahān, defeated the troops of Karīm Khān Zand at Gulnābād, and occupied the former Safavid capital, where he had gold coins struck in his name. He then advanced to Shīrāz, only to turn back at the news that Āzād Khān was advancing from Āzarbāijān. A complicated series of manoeuvres followed, in which Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān eventually made a triumphant progress through Gilān, Tālīsh and across Āzarbāijān to Āzād's stronghold of Urmīya, while Āzād fled into Ottoman territory. This year of 1170/1756–7 was the peak of his career, commemorated by gold coins struck as far apart as Tabrīz, where he left Āghā Muḥammad Khān as his deputy, and Yazd. By Rabī<sup>c</sup>I–Rabī<sup>c</sup>II 1171/December 1757, he was again in Iṣfahān, whence he set out for Shīrāz finally to defeat his Zand rival. But now his luck turned. The countryside around Shīrāz had been laid waste, so that his army lacked forage, while Karīm Khān, safe behind the walls of Shīrāz, refused to give battle. Eventually, Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān was compelled to retreat (Shawwāl 1171/July 1758), with Karīm Khān's most skilful general, Shaikh <sup>c</sup>Alī Khān, in pursuit. As he entered Māzandarān to seek refuge in Astarābād, he was hampered by treachery among his own followers, especially Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān Develū, and was forced to give battle in the least favourable circumstances. Always a courageous fighter, in the end he was struck down by a life-long foe, Muḥammad Khān of Savādkūh, as he tried to effect his escape (15 Jumādā 1172/12 February 1759).

Karīm Khān Zand subsequently entered Astarābād and seized the treasure there. He realized that he could not control this distant province without strong local backing and appointed the experienced Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān Develū as beglerbegī. In thus elevating the Develū Qājārs, he assured the decline of their Qūyūnlū kin, but he left nothing to chance. Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān's eldest son, Āghā Muḥammad Khān, had escaped after his father's death, but was eventually captured and taken to captivity in Shīrāz, where he was later joined by his full-brother, Ḥusain Qulī Khān, and where his paternal aunt, Khadīja Begum, already a member of Karīm Khān's harem, proved an invaluable support. Two other sons, Murtaẓā Qulī Khān and Muṣṭafā Qulī Khān, were allowed to remain in Astarābād, because their mother was the sister of Karīm Khān's appointee as beglerbegī. Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān's remaining sons, Rizā Qulī, Ja<sup>c</sup>far Qulī, Mahdī Qulī and <sup>c</sup>Alī Qulī (<sup>c</sup>Abbās Qulī died about this time), were sent to Qazvīn, where they were confined to a family property, although Ja<sup>c</sup>far Qulī and <sup>c</sup>Alī Qulī were later permitted to join Āghā Muḥammad Khān in Shīrāz. Karīm Khān's treatment of his defeated rival's family was unusually humane for the period.

Āghā Muḥammad Khān remained almost twenty years a hostage in Shīrāz. Karīm Khān accorded him consideration and even sought his advice, acknowledging his skill in political matters. It was nonetheless a long and bitter exile, but it allowed Āghā Muḥammad to acquire an intimate knowledge of his hosts, and perhaps to foresee the divisions amongst the Zands which followed Karīm Khān's death. Moreover, he had, in Khadīja Begum, a confidante in Karīm Khān's harem, to keep him informed about court intrigue, and later help him to escape as soon as Karīm Khān died.

Karīm Khān sent Āghā Muḥammad Khān's brother, Ḥusain Qulī Khān, north again as ḥākim of Dāmghān (Shawwāl 1182/February 1769). It later proved disastrous for the maintenance of Zand control in Qūmis. With Āghā Muḥammad Khān a eunuch, Ḥusain Qulī Khān was next in line for leadership of the Qūyūnlū Qājārs; thus he was bound to act as a counterweight to the Develū Qājārs in the vicinity of the tribal homeland. Once established in Dāmghān, however, Ḥusain Qulī Khān, seeking vengeance against his late father's Develū and other foes, behaved with such ferocity that Karīm Khān was forced to intervene. He was finally murdered near Findarisk, east of Astarābād, by some Yamūt Türkmens with whom he was feuding (c. 1191/1777). By then, his wife, an ʿIzz al-Dīnlū Qājār, had given birth to Faṭḥ ʿAlī (the future Faṭḥ ʿAlī Shāh), as well as another son, also named Ḥusain Qulī.

On 13 Ṣafar 1193/1 March 1779, Karīm Khān died and Āghā Muḥammad Khān escaped from Shīrāz to Māzandarān. These two events mark the end of an epoch. During the half century of turbulent history which separated the elevation of Faṭḥ ʿAlī Khān as *Vakīl al-Dawla* of Ṭahmāsp II in 1138–39/1726, from Āghā Muḥammad Khān's return to his homeland, the history of the Qājārs had been one of struggle. This was partly the result of their own internecine rivalries and partly the result of the recognition, first by the Afsharids and then by the Zands, that the Qājārs posed a serious threat to their own ambitions. Yet for a brief period between 1164–5/1751 and 1172–3/1759, Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān had nearly acquired control over wide areas of northern, western and central Iran, and seems to have behaved as more than a mere tribal khan. He apparently obtained part of Nādir's treasure after 1159–60/1747, which must have enabled him to rule in some opulence. At Ashraf, where he held court, he repaired the Safavid palace and engaged in various public works: a bridge over the Bābul, for example, and a mosque at Bārfarūsh. He also struck coins, evidence of a claim to sovereignty. Hence, when Āghā Muḥammad Khān began, in 1192–3/1779, the process whereby he eventually brought all Iran under his control, he was not so much aspiring to new goals as fulfilling those of his father.

## ĀGHĀ MUḤAMMAD KHĀN AND THE QĀJĀRS

Unlike Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān, however, Āghā Muḥammad Khān solved the two problems which led to his father's downfall: the self-destructive rivalry of the leading Qājār clans, and the acquisition of a broad base of support from among the northern and north-western tribes which could off-set the strength of the tribes of the south and south-west. The solution of these two problems enabled him to achieve the political consolidation which had eluded his immediate predecessors – Ghilzais, Afsharids, Zands, and his own father – since the fall of the Safavid kingdom.

### ĀGHĀ MUḤAMMAD KHĀN QĀJĀR: THE CONSOLIDATION OF POWER (1193–1204/1779–89)

Āghā Muḥammad Khān's career may be divided into four phases. First, his early years and confinement in Shīrāz, which ended in 1193/1779, when he was thirty-seven. Secondly, a period of about six years from 1193/1779 to 1199–1200/1785, during which he consolidated his power-base in the Alburz region and extended his control over much of northern and north-western Iran, in competition with ʿAlī Murād Khān Zand. The third phase, between 1199–1200/1785 and 1208–9/1794, began with the wresting of ʿIrāq-i ʿAjam (central Iran), from the Zands, and ended with the conquest of Fārs and Kirmān, and the death of Luṭf ʿAlī Khān Zand. In the fourth phase, between 1208–9/1794 and 1211–12/1797, Āghā Muḥammad Khān, now master of the greater part of the Iranian plateau and of the territory formerly controlled by the Zands, ravaged the erstwhile Safavid province of Gurjistān (Georgia) in response to the intransigence of its ruler, proclaimed himself Shah, and conquered Khurāsān. At the time of his death, he was planning campaigns against Herat, Bukhārā, or possibly Baghdad.

In 1192–3/1779, Āghā Muḥammad Khān had long been absent from his native province. After escaping from Shīrāz, he met the leading Develū khans in the Varāmīn district and healed the ancient family feud which had been a major cause of the Qājārs' misfortunes. He then visited the shrine of Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīm, where his father's skull was buried, and from there entered Māzandarān. He first had to establish his authority among his Qūyūnlū brothers and half-brothers. Two, in particular, Rizā Qulī and Murtaẓā Qulī, challenged him, but in a battle fought on 15 Rabīʿ I 1193/2 April 1779, he routed them and took Māzandarān. Murtaẓā Qulī, however, withdrew to Astarābād, where he consolidated his position. Āghā Muḥammad Khān could not dislodge him and had to tread warily, since a conflict with Murtaẓā Qulī, whose mother was a Develū, would threaten the fragile alliance he had achieved between the Qūyūnlū and

Develū clans. Also, a more immediate threat presented itself: a combined Zand-Afghan army sent by ʿAlī Murād Khān Zand and commanded by Maḥmūd Khān, son of Āzād Khān Afghānī. Āghā Muḥammad's loyal brother, Jaʿfar Qulī, led the Qājārs against this force and repulsed it. Āghā Muḥammad's hold on Māzandarān was temporarily secure.

He now established himself at Bārfarūsh (Bābul), with Faṭḥ ʿAlī and Ḥusain Qulī, sons of his late brother, Ḥusain Qulī, towards whom he was already displaying marked favour. Shortly after, his brother, Rizā Qulī, resentful that he lacked an apanage, led a band of Lāhijānīs against Bārfarūsh, seized the palace and captured Āghā Muḥammad Khān. When the news reached Astarābād, Murtaẓā Qulī raised a force of Qājārs and Tūrkmens, marched on Sārī and released Āghā Muḥammad Khān. Rizā Qulī Khān and Āghā Muḥammad were reconciled, but the former, still dissatisfied, fled to the feuding Zands. At first, he sought help from ʿAlī Murād Khān in Iṣfahān, then from Ṣādiq Khān in Shīrāz, but neither realized his hopes, and he eventually died in Khurāsān. His former supporters joined Āghā Muḥammad Khān and were employed against Murtaẓā Qulī Khān, who now hoped to capture Māzandarān, but Āghā Muḥammad Khān's troops defeated him in a succession of engagements, and thereafter the two brothers reached an understanding: Murtaẓā Qulī Khān's position was confirmed as *de facto* ruler of Astarābād and he was granted the revenue of several districts in Māzandarān.

These Qājār squabbles, and the gradual emergence of Āghā Muḥammad Khān as sole ruler of Māzandarān, provoked ʿAlī Murād Khān Zand into attempting to invade that province, but Āghā Muḥammad Khān advanced from Bārfarūsh with a force of Qājār cavalry and Māzandarānī *tufangchīs* (musketeers) to drive the invaders back towards Tehran. He then occupied all Qūmis and appointed governors in Simnān, Dāmghān, Shāhrūd and Bisṭām. These actions south of the Alburz enhanced his prestige and provided plunder and assignments with which to reward his followers, especially his numerous siblings. Thus, ʿAlī Qulī Khān, who had assisted him in the conquest of Qūmis, was given Simnān as a *soyūrgbāl*, a land grant in lieu of salary or pension.<sup>7</sup> Āghā Muḥammad returned to Astarābād to renew the various agreements already made with Murtaẓā Qulī Khān and other members of his family.

In the same year, 1195/1781, Āghā Muḥammad Khān for the first time encountered the Russians. The Russian government, interested in opening a direct trade-route with India, had sent Count Voinovich to establish a "factory"

<sup>7</sup> See chapter 13, p. 489, for further discussion of this and related terms.



on the south-eastern shores of the Caspian. The Count appeared with a flotilla off the coast of Gurgān and applied for permission to establish a trading-post at Ashraf, then a favourite residence of Āghā MuḤammad Khān, rebuilt in 1193/1779 on his return from Shīrāz. Āghā MuḤammad Khān refused this request, but Voinovich proceeded to establish a temporary settlement at Qaraduvīn and on the off-shore Āshūrāda islands. Lacking a fleet, Āghā MuḤammad Khān could not prevent this, but was determined that the occupation should not become permanent. He persuaded the Russian commander and his officers to visit him in Astarābād, where they were seized and held hostage until Voinovich sent orders to his men on Āshūrāda to dismantle the buildings and leave.

This experience with the Russians may have prompted Āghā MuḤammad Khān's decision to invade Gīlān in 1196/1782 since its ruler, Hidāyat-Allāh Khān, seemed to welcome contacts with Russian traders, who frequented the bazaars of Enzeli and Rasht. Āghā MuḤammad Khān regarded the Russian presence in Gīlān with suspicion and had other reasons for marching into Gīlān. It was a flourishing province. Its ruler drew substantial revenue from the silk industry and sea trade with Russia. Hidāyat-Allāh Khān's accumulation of treasure doubtless provoked Āghā MuḤammad Khān's greed. He also had a grievance against the khan. Originally appointed ruler of Gīlān by MuḤammad Ḥasan Khān Qājār, Hidāyat-Allāh Khān had betrayed the Qājār cause and become a client of the Zands.

The Qājār troops met with no resistance on entering Gīlān, while Hidāyat-Allāh Khān made a show of compliance by sending two emissaries, Mīrzā Ṣādiq, his *munajjim-bāshī* (chief astrologer) and Āghā Ṣādiq of Lāhījān, to sue for favourable terms. But Hidāyat-Allāh Khān did not trust Āghā MuḤammad Khān and left Gīlān by sea for Shīrvān. The Qājār army plundered Rasht and Āghā MuḤammad secured ample treasure. His followers could be richly rewarded. Elated by victory, he sent his brother, Ja'far Qulī Khān, to conquer Khamsa, the region south of the Alburz extending westwards from Qazvīn to the borders of Āzarbāijān, with Zanjān as its administrative centre. Ja'far Qulī Khān defeated a Zand force in the vicinity of Ray or Karaj and occupied Qazvīn. He then proceeded to Zanjān, soon capturing that city. Āghā MuḤammad Khān joined him at Sulṭānīya, with the rest of the army from Gīlān. During the following years, however, Hidāyat-Allāh Khān re-established himself without difficulty as ruler of Gīlān, while the Qājārs were occupied elsewhere.

Between Khamsa to the west, and Qūmis to the east, lay the country around Tehran which had long served as a Zand outpost, threatening the Qājār homelands in Māzandarān and Gurgān. During 1197/1783, therefore, Āghā

Muḥammad Khān decided to eliminate this menace by besieging Tehran and evicting its garrison, but without success. Plague first swept the town, and then the besiegers' camp, so that he had to march his ailing troops off towards 'Alī Bulāgh (Chashma 'Alī), near Dāmghān.

In the following year, 1198/1784, Āghā Muḥammad Khān met the greatest challenge of his career so far. Five years had passed since his flight from Shīrāz, and in that time he had done much to end the feuds which had hitherto hindered Qājār ambitions. Not only had he asserted his authority among his kinsmen, but had gained control of both the northern and southern foothills of the Alburz, apart from the environs of Tehran. His threat to Zand control of the plateau could not be ignored. 'Alī Murād Khān Zand, in retaliation for the Qājārs' attack on Tehran the previous year, sent a large army to Māzandarān under the command of his son, Shaikh Vais Khān. The notables of Māzandarān hastened to submit, while Āghā Muḥammad Khān, abandoned by all but a handful of followers, retreated to Astarābād, where he strengthened the fortifications. Murtaẓā Qulī Khān, fearing that his property in Māzandarān was being ravaged by the invaders, and probably considering Āghā Muḥammad Khān's position hopeless, joined the Zands. Apparently encouraged by this defection, 'Alī Murād Khān sent additional forces into Māzandarān to advance against Astarābād. The Zand troops, under the command of Muḥammad Zāhir Khān, a kinsman of 'Alī Murād Khān, laid siege to Astarābād, but neglected their lines of communication. In Astarābād, Āghā Muḥammad Khān had prepared plentiful supplies. Daily skirmishing below the walls devastated the surrounding countryside so that the Zands needed supplies from Māzandarān, but Āghā Muḥammad Khān sent out raiding parties to attack the inadequately guarded route along which the Zands' provisions had to come. When the besiegers' plight was desperate, Āghā Muḥammad Khān sallied out from behind his walls and dispersed them. Muḥammad Zāhir Khān fled towards the Qara-Qum, was captured by the Qājārs' Yamūt allies, and was handed over to Āghā Muḥammad Khān for execution. Few Zand soldiers found their way back to Māzandarān, and Āghā Muḥammad Khān's forces were soon in hot pursuit. Near Ashraf, he defeated the dispersed the principal Zand garrison in Māzandarān and pressed on to Sārī, the capital. By the beginning of 1199/November 1784, Māzandarān was free of the invaders. 'Alī Murād Khān raised fresh troops and sent them north under the command of his cousin, Rustam Khān Zand, but they were repulsed by a Qājār army commanded by Ja'far Qulī Khān. 'Alī Murād Khān died not long after, on 1 Rabi' II 1199/11 February 1785. As soon as Āghā Muḥammad Khān heard the news, he ordered his troops to advance on Tehran.

Outside Tehran, Āghā Muḥammad Khān prepared for a siege, but there then occurred an incident highly indicative of the prevailing attitude of the times. During the preceding fifteen years, Tehran, which was strongly walled, had changed hands on a number of occasions, but had remained a bastion of Zand hegemony in the north. At the approach of Āghā Muḥammad Khān's army, the Tehranis closed their gates and sent out a message to the effect that, since Ja'far Khān Zand was now ruler in Iṣfahān, they regarded him as their sovereign and were his obedient servants, adding, however, that they would obey whomever actually occupied the throne. Āghā Muḥammad Khān was thus to understand that were he to defeat Ja'far Khān, these people would acknowledge him as their sovereign. He immediately set off for Iṣfahān. Ja'far Khān Zand sent troops to intercept him, but they turned back at Qum without giving battle. A larger Zand force then advanced as far as Kāshān, only to be defeated at Nuṣratābād, north-west of the city. As soon as news of this disaster reached Ja'far Khān Zand, he fled to Shīrāz. Āghā Muḥammad Khān entered Iṣfahān, where he found the remaining Zand treasure, and the khan's harem. The Qājār army plundered the city, still the largest and probably the richest in the country.

During the summer of 1199/1785, Āghā Muḥammad Khān made Iṣfahān his base while he dealt with 'Irāq-i 'Ajam, enforcing the submission of Aḥmad Khān, another son of Āzād Khān Afghānī, who had been Zand commander at Nuṣratābād, and that of the Bakhtiyārī Khāns. In Iṣfahān, he appointed a beglerbegī who had held the same office under 'Alī Murād Khān Zand and who, at the latter's death, had proclaimed himself Shah until imprisoned by Ja'far Khān Zand. Āghā Muḥammad Khān released him and, judging him reliable, re-appointed him. Having made these arrangements, he left for Tehran; he had proved himself worthy of the Tehranis' obedience by deposing Ja'far Khān Zand and capturing the former capital of the kingdom. The Pazukī Kurdish chieftain, Majnūn Khān, was sent ahead to receive the city's submission, while the main army moved westwards to Hamadān, where a number of Kurdish and Turkish tribal chieftains submitted or renewed allegiance formerly given.

Āghā Muḥammad Khān entered Tehran, which was henceforth to be the Qājār capital, on 11 Jumādā I 1200/12 March 1786. From this time, he seems to have regarded himself as ruler of Iran, although he refrained from assuming the title of Shah.

Ja'far Khān Zand still ruled in Shīrāz, and once he had ascertained that Āghā Muḥammad Khān was back in the north, he marched on Iṣfahān. An attempt to defend the city by the Qājār beglerbegī failed and following its capture, a Zand governor was appointed. Detachments were sent forward to occupy Kāshān and

Qum, while Jaʿfar Khān himself took the road to Hamadān. Here, however, an alliance of local tribal leaders, including Khusrau Khān, the Vālī of Ardalān and Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān Qarāgūzlū, attacked and defeated him. Jaʿfar Khān Zand retired to Iṣfahān. By now, however, Āghā Muḥammad Khān had learnt of the loss of Iṣfahān, and was rapidly marching southwards. Jaʿfar Khān abandoned Iṣfahān a second time and fell back upon Shīrāz. Āghā Muḥammad Khān reoccupied Iṣfahān without difficulty, appointed his brother, Jaʿfar Qulī Khān, as beglerbegī, left him with a strong garrison, and then marched in the direction of Gulpāygān to receive the formal submission of the Vālī of Ardalān. Khusrau Khān. The latter had followed his tribal alliance's rout of Jaʿfar Khān Zand by advancing as far as Malāʾir, and thence to Gulpāygān. Here they halted and Khusrau Khān sent all the booty and prisoners taken in the recent battle near Hamadān to Āghā Muḥammad Khān, with a letter of submission. Āghā Muḥammad Khān acknowledged the Vālī's homage and sent him gifts and the grant of the districts of Sunqur and Kullīāʾī. The submission of so important a chieftain was a notable event. From this year, 1200/1786, the alliance, initiated long before in the lifetime of Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Qājār, between the Qājār dynasty and the Vālīs of Ardalān, was reinforced by periodical dynastic marriages.

News of a revolt by the governor of Zanjān now forced Āghā Muḥammad Khān to turn north again. The rebellious governor was pardoned and Āghā Muḥammad Khān made a triumphal entry into Tehran, but Gīlān was requiring his attention. Since the Qājārs' first invasion in 1196–7/1782, Hidāyat-Allāh Khān had returned to his province, apparently with Russian assistance. Āghā Muḥammad Khān considered the whole Caspian coast to be threatened by Hidāyat-Allāh Khān's dalliance with the Russians. He was not himself averse to allowing Russian merchants to trade in his territory. He did so at Mashhad-i Sar in Māzandarān, but their movements were strictly regulated and he was determined not to grant them privileged status or special concessions, as Hidāyat-Allāh Khān had done. He had not forgotten the Voinovich affair of 1195–6/1781. In any case, Hidāyat-Allāh Khān's return to Rasht was an open challenge to Qājār hegemony in the north and in itself, sufficient cause for war. Fortunately for Āghā Muḥammad Khān, Hidāyat-Allāh had many enemies; he had for years participated in the feuds characteristic of the ruling families in Gīlān.

The second invasion of Gīlān in 1200/1786 proved as easy as the first. Such support as Hidāyat-Allāh Khān had previously enjoyed melted away. On the march to Rasht, Āghā Muḥammad enlisted in his service Mahdī Beg Khalʿatbarī, ruler of Tunakābun, a former appointee of Karīm Khān Zand along

with other defectors. The Russian consul in Gīlān, supposedly an ally of Hidāyat-Allāh Khān, betrayed him by supplying the Qājārs with arms. Recognizing the futility of further resistance, Hidāyat-Allāh Khān boarded a Russian ship at Enzeli, bound for Shīrvān or Lankarān, but was handed over to Āghā ʿAlī of Shaft (or, according to a different source, another local ruler with whom he was feuding), who killed him to avenge the massacre of his family some years before. Gīlān was now absorbed into the Qājār kingdom. Āghā MuḤammad Khān did not regard the Russian settlements at Rasht or Enzeli as sacrosanct. The local Russian officials had shown themselves to be treacherous in their dealings with the late Hidāyat-Allāh Khān; no doubt Āghā MuḤammad Khān was shrewd enough to assess the value of their friendship, despite their protestations of good will. Apart from the actual annexation of the province, the most important gain was the great treasure found in the late ruler's palace. Enough is known of Āghā MuḤammad Khān's character for it to be evident that this would mean more to him than the friendship of unreliable Russian officials. In any event, an aspiring Iranian conqueror needed gold with which to bind men to his service and recruit fresh followers.

It is clear that 1199-1200/1785-6 was Āghā MuḤammad Khān's *annus mirabilis*. During that period, he had gained control of ʿIrāq-i ʿAjam, Iṣfahān, Tehran and Gīlān, had driven the Zand ruler, Jaʿfar Khān, back to Shīrāz, and, in all but name, had become Shah. A period of relative inactivity followed these triumphs before Āghā MuḤammad Khān turned south again. Meanwhile, Jaʿfar Khān Zand moved into the Kūhgīlūya country and occupied Bihbahān, while sending Zand troops to MuḤammara, later named Khurramshahr, to punish the Banū Kaʿb for disloyalty. After celebrating Naurūz in 1201/1787 in Bihbahān, he returned in triumph to Shīrāz, where he learnt that the governor of Yazd, Taqī Khān, had revolted. He gathered as large a force as possible and moved to Yazd, where Taqī Khān was strengthening the city's fortifications. Taqī Khān also applied to the ruler of Ṭabas, Amīr MuḤammad Khān, for assistance. The Zand army was soon encamped below the walls of Yazd, but, after several assaults had been repulsed, the unexpected arrival of the Khān of Ṭabas and his troops induced panic among the besiegers, whose army dispersed, leaving Amīr MuḤammad Khān to plunder the Zand camp at his leisure. He obtained a vast booty which included Jaʿfar Khān's tents, baggage and the entire siege-train.

Amīr MuḤammad Khān with his followers and some of Taqī Khān's, the Zand artillery and the wealth obtained from Jaʿfar Khān's camp, now took the road to Iṣfahān, recruiting additional cavalry from the districts of Kūhpāya, Nāʾīn, and Ārdistān en route. The governor of Iṣfahān, Jaʿfar Qulī Khān,

## THE STRUGGLE WITH LUṬF ʿALĪ KHĀN ZAND

probably expected an attack by Jaʿfar Khān Zand from the south; not one from the east by an obscure ruler in the Dasht-i Lūt. Nevertheless, he quickly marched out against Amīr Muḥammad Khān, scattered his troops and seized his train and artillery. At this juncture Āghā Muḥammad Khān decided to head southwards. He joined his brother in Iṣfahān in 1202/1788, despatched his nephew, Faṭḥ ʿAlī Khān to obtain the submission of Taqī Khān in Yazd, and set off himself to chastise the Qashqāʾī, who withdrew into the mountains to avoid a battle. However, the Qājār army pressed on to within sixty-five miles of Shīrāz. Āghā Muḥammad Khān probably hoped to lure Jaʿfar Khān Zand from behind his formidable walls and bring him to battle. But Jaʿfar Khān would not be drawn, and Āghā Muḥammad Khān returned to Iṣfahān where, having replaced Jaʿfar Qulī Khān with his youngest brother, ʿAlī Qulī Khān, he was rejoined by Faṭḥ ʿAlī Khān, who had defeated Taqī Khān of Yazd. Āghā Muḥammad Khān then set off for Tehran.

With Āghā Muḥammad Khān having gone north again, Jaʿfar Khān Zand began to prepare yet another expedition against Iṣfahān. ʿAlī Qulī Khān, learning of this, sent a force of Qarāgūzlū tribesman to hold Qumishah, but the advancing Zand army worsted them. ʿAlī Qulī Khān thereupon withdrew to Kāshān, leaving Iṣfahān open to Jaʿfar Khān Zand. This was a serious set-back for the Qājārs, and Āghā Muḥammad Khān advanced by forced marches from Tehran to Iṣfahān, causing Jaʿfar Khān to flee back to Shīrāz. Qājār rule was re-established in Iṣfahān, but Āghā Muḥammad withdrew to Tehran again, as if not yet confident that he could succeed against Jaʿfar Khān on his own ground and in so hostile a countryside as Fārs. But on 25 Rabīʿ II 1203/23 January 1789, Jaʿfar Khān was assassinated. A four-month civil war followed in which various contenders among the Zand ruling family competed for the succession. This struggle ended with Luṭf ʿAlī Khān's triumphant entry into Shīrāz in Shaʿban-Ramaḍān 1203/May 1789. Āghā Muḥammad Khān seems to have considered that, Jaʿfar Khān having been replaced by the inexperienced Luṭf ʿAlī Khān, the time had come to eliminate the Zands.

## THE STRUGGLE WITH LUṬF ʿALĪ KHĀN ZAND

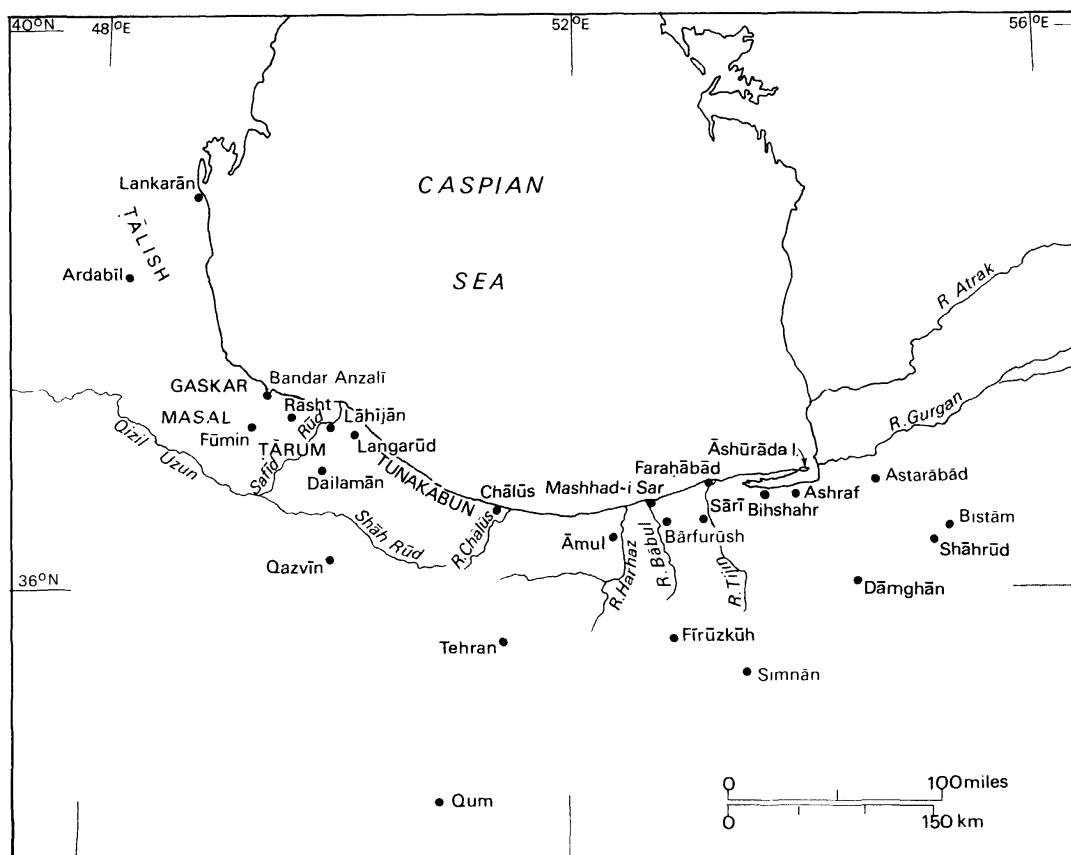
Āghā Muḥammad Khān now advanced on Shīrāz. When he was about eight miles north-west of the city, Luṭf ʿAlī Khān intercepted him. An inconclusive battle was fought on 12 Shawwāl 1203/25 June 1789. Luṭf ʿAlī Khān withdrew into Shīrāz, where Āghā Muḥammad Khān besieged him until 18 Dhu'l-Hijja/7 September. He then struck camp and returned to Tehran, where he remained

until the following Naurūz. On 3 Ramaḍān 1204/17 May 1790, he again set out for Shīrāz. In western Fārs, the governor of Bihbahān submitted to him, but Luṭf ʿAlī Khān responded by again leading his troops out of Shīrāz. This time no confrontation occurred. Āghā Muḥammad withdrew to the north-west to settle the affairs of Qazvīn and Khamṣa, while Luṭf ʿAlī Khān unsuccessfully attacked Kirmān. An incident then occurred which may have determined Āghā Muḥammad Khān's later attitudes to those around him. There was hitherto little in Āghā Muḥammad Khān's career to suggest that he was more ferocious or brutal than his contemporaries. Hitherto, his staunchest supporter had been his brother, Jaʿfar Qulī Khān, who had apparently assumed that he would eventually succeed Āghā Muḥammad Khān as head of the Qājār tribe, but who was becoming restless since he had not been formally designated heir. Moreover, Āghā Muḥammad Khān obviously favoured his nephew, Faṭḥ ʿAlī Khān, son of the late Ḥusain Qulī Khān. A quarrel arose between the brothers, and Āghā Muḥammad Khān ordered Jaʿfar Qulī Khān's execution (1205/1790-1). Āghā Muḥammad Khān presumably considered his brother's death a necessity, since he was aware, from his familiarity with Zand family rivalries, how a dynasty could disintegrate through fratricidal conflict.

The news of Luṭf ʿAlī Khān's failure at Kirmān allowed Āghā Muḥammad to concentrate on the problems of Āzarbāijān. He appointed Faṭḥ ʿAlī Khān beglerbegī of ʿIrāq-i ʿAjam as far as the northern border of Fārs, and advanced into Āzarbāijān in the spring of 1206/1791. He halted at Tārum on the Saḥīd Rūd and sent his close relative and confidant, Sulaimān Khān Qūyūnlū, to subjugate Tālīsh. Meanwhile, he himself moved on to Sarāb, where the governor, Ṣādiq Khān, chief of the Shaqāqī Kurds, had shown hostility. From there he proceeded to Ardabīl to visit the shrine, and then entered Qarājadāgh, where he destroyed all opposition, and appointed the Dunbulī Kurdish chieftain, Ḥusain Qulī, governor of Khūy and Tabrīz.

While Āghā Muḥammad Khān was pacifying the north-west, important events had occurred in the south. Luṭf ʿAlī Khān Zand and his troops had marched north to attack Faṭḥ ʿAlī Khān, who was encamped at Qumīshah, and advanced on Iṣfahān. Taking advantage of Luṭf ʿAlī Khān's departure, Ḥājji Ibrāhīm, the *kalāntar* of Fārs, seized Shīrāz, while his brother staged a mutiny among Luṭf ʿAlī Khān's troops. Luṭf ʿAlī Khān hurried back to Shīrāz, only to find its gates closed to him, and his officers' families held hostage in the citadel. He thereupon withdrew into the mountains between Kāzarūn and the Persian Gulf, where he gathered sufficient forces to attempt the recapture of Shīrāz. Ḥājji Ibrāhīm apparently staged this *coup* with no further end in view than to

## THE STRUGGLE WITH LUṬF ʿALĪ KHĀN ZAND



Map 3. Gilān, Māzandarān and Gurgān during the lifetime of Āghā Muḥammad Khān Qājār

expel the Zands and establish control over Shīrāz, but Luṭf ʿAlī Khān's resilience necessitated a change of plan. Ḥājji Ibrāhīm sent an envoy to Āghā Muḥammad Khān, then in Khamsa returning from Āzarbāijān, offering a gift of 3,000 mares, formerly Zand property, and requesting on behalf of the people of Fārs that he become their ruler. For Āghā Muḥammad Khān, this was an unanticipated opportunity to bring about both the conquest of Fārs and the final destruction of the Zands. He promptly accepted the offer, appointed Ḥājji Ibrāhīm beglerbegī in Fārs, despatched an officer to Shīrāz to seize Zand property there and bring Luṭf ʿAlī Khān's family to Tehran, and ordered Faṭḥ ʿAlī Khān to have troops stationed in Ābāda ready to assist Ḥājji Ibrāhīm if necessary.

Meanwhile, Luṭf ʿAlī Khān had defeated the troops sent against him by Ḥājji Ibrāhīm and had seized the fort at Kāzarūn. He had advanced to the vicinity of Shīrāz and was preparing to starve his former capital into submission. Inside the city, Ḥājji Ibrāhīm found that some of the tribal levies, while willing to acquiesce in the removal of Luṭf ʿAlī Khān, had expected his replacement by another Zand. Ḥājji Ibrāhīm was too far committed against the late ruling house to be



able to compromise on this issue. He disarmed troops still loyal to the Zands by a ruse and expelled them from the city. They promptly joined Luṭf ʿAlī Khān's forces, but their lack of weapons made them less useful than would otherwise have been the case. Nevertheless, Luṭf ʿAlī Khān began to gain ground again, being in control of virtually all the districts around Shīrāz. He attempted negotiation with Ḥājji Ibrāhīm, even offering to retire with his family, now in the latter's hands, to India or Ottoman territory. Ḥājji Ibrāhīm rejected these terms and sent a message to Ābāda, requesting that Qājār troops come to Shīrāz by a circuitous route. These beat off the first Zand troops sent against them, but were defeated when Luṭf ʿAlī Khān took the field in person. Ḥājji Ibrāhīm remained safe in Shīrāz, but Luṭf ʿAlī Khān held the surrounding countryside.

As soon as Āghā MuḤammad Khān learnt that the troops from Ābāda had suffered a reverse and that Ḥājji Ibrāhīm's situation was desperate, he sent 7,000 horsemen, together with the remaining forces at Ābāda, to join the Ḥājji. Luṭf ʿAlī Khān allowed these reinforcements to reach Shīrāz, probably (as the historian Fasāḥi suggests) anticipating that once the garrison was strengthened, it would emerge from the city and could be destroyed in open battle. He was correct in this, for shortly afterwards an engagement was fought to the west of Shīrāz, and he triumphed over the combined forces of Ḥājji Ibrāhīm and his Qājār auxiliaries. This was late in 1205–6/1791, or early in 1206–7/1792. The Shīrāzīs were now suffering severely from the siege, and it was doubtful whether they could hold out. Much of Fārs was devastated by the fighting, and for three or four years locusts had plagued the countryside. Although Luṭf ʿAlī Khān's troops suffered almost as much as those of Ḥājji Ibrāhīm, some of the latter were beginning to defect to the Zands. Āghā MuḤammad Khān therefore mustered as large a force as possible and himself advanced into Fārs. On 14 Shawwāl 1206/5 June 1792, Luṭf ʿAlī Khān, with a handful of troops, made a desperate night attack on Āghā MuḤammad Khān's camp near Persepolis. It seemed successful: Luṭf ʿAlī Khān was assured that the Qājārs were routed. Elated by this success, he allowed his troops to scatter and rested for the night, only to discover at first light that Āghā MuḤammad Khān still held the field. He then fled, via Nirīz and Kirmān, to Ṭabas.

Āghā MuḤammad Khān entered Shīrāz on 1 Dhu'l-Ḥijja 1207/21 July 1792 and remained there for a month, holding court in the Bāgh-i Vakīl (cf. p. 906). Before leaving for Tehran (11 Muḥarram 1207/29 August 1792) he confirmed Ḥājji Ibrāhīm as beglerbegī of Fārs and exhumed the body of Karīm Khān Zand to be sent to Tehran with gates of the Vakīl's palace. He also carried off surviving members of the Zand family. In the spring of the following year, he

returned to Shīrāz, and asserted his hold over the city more brutally. Ḥājji Ibrāhīm and other supporters of the Qājārs were granted titles and favours, but all the notables of the province, including Ḥājji Ibrāhīm, were compelled to surrender women and children as hostages. He also ordered the destruction of the citadel and the outer walls of Shīrāz before leaving for Tehran on 14 Muḥarram 1208/23 August 1793.

While Āghā Muḥammad Khān consolidated his hold over Fārs, Luṭf ʿAlī Khān was still a fugitive. From Ṭabas, with the assistance of the local khan, he marched on Yazd and dispersed such forces as opposed him there. He then captured Abarqūh, where he left a garrison, and moved on to Dārāb. A pursuing Qājār army wasted time besieging Abarqūh, and then marched via Sarvistān, towards Nirīz, where Luṭf ʿAlī Khān was known to be. For some eleven days, the two forces skirmished inconclusively, but eventually Luṭf ʿAlī Khān's men, wearying of the struggle, began to desert. Luṭf ʿAlī Khān returned to Ṭabas and then set out for Qandahar, presumably to seek assistance from the Durrānī ruler, Tīmūr Shāh; at Qāʾin, however, he learnt that the latter had recently died. He then went south to Narmashīr and Bam, where two local khans offered to co-operate with him. With this additional support, he captured Kirmān in Shaʿbān 1208/March 1794, was proclaimed *Pādishāh* and struck coins.

Āghā Muḥammad Khān now mobilized all his available forces for a campaign against Kirmān. He left Tehran on 3 Shawwāl 1208/4 May 1794 for Fārs, and was joined north of Qum by Ḥājji Ibrāhīm and the notables of the province. From there, he advanced to Kirmān, where Luṭf ʿAlī Khān conducted a skilful defence, defeating the Qājār advance guard. About this time, it seems that Āghā Muḥammad Khān's frustration over the Zands began to give way to acts of irrational violence. It was said that on one occasion, catching sight of a coin struck in Luṭf ʿAlī Khān's name, he immediately ordered that Luṭf ʿAlī Khān's captive son, Faṭḥ-Allāh, be castrated. Luṭf ʿAlī Khān held out in Kirmān for four months, but the morale of his troops steadily deteriorated. Finally, on 29 RabīʿI 1209/24 October 1794, a traitor opened the gates of the citadel, the besiegers overran the city, and Luṭf ʿAlī Khān fled to Bam. Āghā Muḥammad Khān, enraged at his escape, ordered that all male prisoners be killed or blinded, and the women and children handed over to his troops as slaves. Kirmān, systematically plundered and devastated, did not recover before the 20th century. In Bam, Luṭf ʿAlī Khān was betrayed by his host and handed over to Āghā Muḥammad Khān, who ordered him to be raped by his slaves, blinded and taken to Tehran, where he was tortured to death.

While Āghā Muḥammad Khān was besieging Kirmān, Faṭḥ ʿAlī Khān had

#### ĀGHĀ MUḤAMMAD KHĀN AND THE QĀJĀRS

been asserting Qājār authority throughout the sparsely populated Kirmān province by means of a circuitous march through Bam, Narmashīr, Jīruft, the country north of Bandar ʿAbbās and Lāristān. At the beginning of Jumādā I 1209/November 1794, both uncle and nephew were back in Shīrāz, and in Jumādā II 1209/December–January 1794–5, Fath ʿAlī Khān was appointed beglerbegī of Fārs, Kirmān and Yazd, with the title of *Jabānbānī*, formerly held by Luṭf ʿAlī Khān. The loyal notables of Fārs were rewarded for their support and the members of the new beglerbegī's household and administration were named. Ḥājji Ibrāhīm was appointed grand vizier with the title of *Iʿtimād al-Daula*.

#### EXPANSION INTO GEORGIA AND KHURĀSĀN

Āghā MuḤammad Khān could now turn to the restoration of the outlying provinces of the Safavid kingdom. Returning to Tehran in the spring of 1209/1795, he assembled a force of some 60,000 cavalry and infantry and in Shawwāl–Dhu'l-Qaʿda/May, set off for Āzarbāijān, intending to conquer the country between the rivers Aras and Kura, formerly under Safavid control. This region comprised a number of independent khanates of which the most important was Qarābāgh, with its capital at Shūsha; Ganja, with its capital of the same name; Shīrvān across the Kura, with its capital at Shamākhī; and to the north-west, on both banks of the Kura, Christian Georgia (Gurjistān), with its capital at Tiflis. As he approached the Aras, Āghā MuḤammad divided his force into three. The left wing was sent in the direction of Erivan, the right advanced parallel to the Caspian shore into the Mughān steppe and across the lower Aras into Shīrvān and Dāghistān. The centre, under Āghā MuḤammad Khān himself, advanced towards the fortress of Shūsha. Ibrāhīm Khān, ruler of Qarābāgh, had long anticipated such an attack. He had not only strengthened his capital but assembled a strong force to halt the Qājār. He endeavoured to block Āghā MuḤammad Khān's advance with this army, but was defeated and forced to withdraw behind the walls of Shūsha, pursued by the Qājār vanguard. Āghā MuḤammad Khān then moved forward with the main part of the army, and the siege of Shūsha began. It lasted from 20 Dhu'l-Hijja 1209/8 July 1795 until 23 Muḥarram 1210/9 August 1795, and although Ibrāhīm Khān's allies from Bākū and elsewhere defected and made peace with Āghā MuḤammad Khān, his own troops resisted vigorously. Both sides desired a settlement, and Ibrāhīm Khān eventually decided to submit to Āghā MuḤammad Khān, to pay regular tribute and to surrender hostages, although the Qājārs were still denied entry into

Shūsha. Ibrāhīm Khān retained his enmity towards the Qājārs, as subsequent events would prove, but since the main objective of the campaign was the conquest of Georgia, Āghā Muḥammad Khān was prepared to negotiate, to open the road to Tiflis.

Much had happened in Georgia since the fall of the Safavids. Recently, on 23 Shaʿbān 1197/24 July 1783, Erekle (Heraclius), the ruler of Kartli and Kakheti (the central core of the Georgian kingdom) and Catherine II of Russia had signed the Treaty of Georgievsk which made Georgia a Russian protectorate. In it, Erekle specifically renounced Georgia's former dependence upon Iran, while another article of the Treaty allowed the stationing of Russian troops in Georgia for mutual defence against Georgia's Ottoman and Iranian neighbours. Following the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish War of 1787, however, the Russian garrisons had been withdrawn. Now, nearly a decade later, Erekle, having renounced his allegiance to Iran, found himself unprotected in the face of a resurgence of Iranian military power. Āghā Muḥammad Khān cannot have been ignorant of events in Georgia, or unaware of Russia's threatening presence beyond the Caucasus. His suspicions had been aroused by recent Russian activity in both Gīlān and Astarābād. This may explain part of the hostility he felt towards the Vālī of Georgia, although while the Zands were still undefeated he had remained ostensibly amicable. In 1200–1/1786, soon after the death of ʿAlī Murād Khān Zand, he received an envoy from Erekle, and offered the latter sovereignty over Āzarbāijān, not then in his possession, if Erekle could obtain Russian backing for him in his conflict with the Zands. Five years later, his conquest of Āzarbāijān in 1206/1791 raised apprehensions in Tiflis, and Erekle had applied to Saint Petersburg for assistance, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Georgievsk, although without result, since the Russian government was preoccupied elsewhere. As soon as Erekle heard of Āghā Muḥammad Khān's plans for a summer campaign across the Aras in 1210/1795, he sent an urgent request to Saint Petersburg for Russian aid. None was given, however, largely on the advice of General Ivan Gudovich, the commander of the Caucasian line, who did not take the threat seriously.

Meanwhile, Āghā Muḥammad Khān had left Shūsha and advanced on Ganja, where the ruler, Javād Khān, submitted. From there, he sent a threatening letter to Erekle. He reminded him that, under the Safavids, Georgia had been a part of Iran and demanded Erekle's immediate submission, assuring him that if he came to pay homage, he would be confirmed as Vālī. According to the author of the *Fārsnāma-yi Nāṣirī*, Āghā Muḥammad Khān declared, "Shah Esmāʿil Ṣafavi ruled over the province of Georgia. When in the days of the deceased king we

were engaged in conquering the provinces of Persia, we did not proceed to this region. As most of the provinces of Persia have come into our possession now, you must, according to ancient law, consider Georgia part of the empire and appear before our majesty. You have to confirm your obedience; then you may remain in the possession of your governorship. If you do not do this, you will be treated as the others.”<sup>8</sup>

Erekle reacted by reaffirming his allegiance to Russia and summoning all the troops he could muster to Tiflis. Āghā MuḤammad Khān now left Ganja with 40,000 cavalry, having been joined by his original left and right wings. On 25 Šafar 1210/10 September 1795, the Qājār vanguard joined battle with the Georgians, commanded by Erekle’s grandson, but was forced back. Then Āghā MuḤammad Khān and the main body of the army came up on the next day, and a decisive engagement took place outside Tiflis. The battle lasted a whole day. The Iranians were three times repulsed and Āghā MuḤammad Khān is said to have recited verses from the *Shāhnāma* of Firdausī to encourage his troops, who greatly outnumbered the enemy.<sup>9</sup> By nightfall, however, the Georgians had suffered heavy casualties and had retreated into the citadel of Tiflis. Later, what remained of the Vālī’s army, and those inhabitants of Tiflis who could, abandoned the city.

Tiflis was systematically sacked, and after the devastation and massacre, 15,000 Georgian slaves, mostly women and children, were deported to Iran. An eye-witness, who entered the city shortly after the Iranian troops had withdrawn, described the pitiful sights he saw: “I therefore pursued my way, paved as it were, with carcasses, and entered Tiflis by the gate of Tapitag: but what was my consternation on finding here the bodies of women and children slaughtered by the sword of the enemy; to say nothing of the men, of whom I saw more than a thousand, as I should suppose, lying dead in one little tower! The Shah had arrived at Handshu, on his way back to Tiflis, and was consequently but three versts off. In traversing the city to the gate of Handshu, I found not a living creature but two infirm old men, whom the enemy had treated with great cruelty, to make them confess where they had concealed their money and treasures. The city was almost entirely consumed, and still continued to smoke in different places; and the stench from the putrefying bodies, together with the heat which prevailed, was intolerable, and certainly infectious.”<sup>10</sup>

Āghā MuḤammad Khān remained nine days in the vicinity of Tiflis. His victory proclaimed the restoration of Iranian military power in a region for-

<sup>8</sup> Ḥasan-i Fasā’ī, *Fārsnāma-yi Nāṣirī*, tr. Busse, p. 66.

<sup>9</sup> Malcolm, *History* II, p. 284.

<sup>10</sup> Artemi, *Memoirs*, pp. 228–9.

merly under Safavid domination. Russia's client, Georgia, had been punished and Russia's prestige damaged. Across the Ottoman frontier, the Pashas of Kars and Erzerum sensed danger. But Āghā Muḥammad Khān did not stay to consolidate his victory. He turned back and marched down the valley of the Kura and, having ravaged the Khanate of Shīrvān, established his winter-quarters in the Mughān steppe. It was here at Javād, to the west of the confluence of the Kura and the Aras, that Nādir Shāh had held his coronation in 1148-9/1736, sixty years earlier.

Āghā Muḥammad Khān had hitherto refused the title of Shah, on the grounds that Iran was not entirely subject to his authority. Now, the Qājār chieftains and officers of state, headed by Ḥājī Ibrāhīm, came and pressed him to take the title of Shah before marching on Mashhad and bringing the former Safavid province of Khurāsān, as far as the Āmū-Daryā river, under his protection. In agreeing to their petition, Āghā Muḥammad Khān is supposed to have said, "If, according to your desire, I put the crown on my head, this will cause you, in the beginning, toil and hardship, as I take no pleasure in bearing the title of king as long as I am not one of the greatest kings of Persia. This petition will not be granted but by toil and fatigue."<sup>11</sup> Āghā Muḥammad Khān intended to make his coronation ceremony an act of legitimation. Following the Safavid custom, the sword of Shāh Ismā'īl Ṣafavī was suspended from the roof of the tomb-chamber of Shaikh Ṣafī at the shrine of Ardabīl on the eve of the coronation, while prayers were offered for the new Shah's welfare. The next day, the sword was brought from Ardabīl and girded on the new ruler. The crown was placed on his head and on each arm he wore an arm-band in which were set the famous gems, the *Daryā-yi Nūr* and *Tāj-i Māh*. Surviving portraits of Āghā Muḥammad show him wearing a high, ovoid crown, the lower part encrusted with pearls and precious stones. The ceremony was followed by a feast and distribution of alms. Shortly afterwards, the Shah and his army set off for Tehran, but his ultimate destination was Mashhad.

Ḥājī Ibrāhīm stayed in Tehran to supervise the administration, and there he received the envoys of the French Republic, J-G. Brugières and G-A. Olivier, who urged him to persuade the Shah to consolidate his hold over Georgia and establish an outlet to Europe by way of Mingrelia, before the Russians annexed the southern Caucasus region. Meanwhile, the confusion prevailing in Khurāsān made its conquest comparatively easy. This region, untouched by the earlier struggles among the Zand, Bakhtiyārī and Qājār rivals, had formerly

<sup>11</sup> Ḥasan-i Fasā'ī, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

been protected by the Durrānī ruler, Aḥmad Shāh, but after his death in 1187/1773, his successors preferred to concentrate their attention upon their Indian borderlands. In the late decades of the 18th century, Khurāsān was in a state of near anarchy. In Mashhad, the authority of Shāhrukh, Nādir Shāh's grandson, was hardly more than nominal. Outside Mashhad, the surrounding countryside was held by various independent chieftains, of whom the most powerful was probably Ishāq Khān, with his headquarters at Turbat-i Ḥaidarī.<sup>12</sup> In the eastern foothills of the Alburz, Kurdish chieftains controlled the higher land from such strongholds as Bujnūrd, Khabūshān (Qūchān), Darra Gaz and Kalāt. To the north, in the direction of the Qara-Qum, the barrier between Iran and the Khanates of Khiva and Bukhārā, dwelt the Tūrkmen: from west to east, the Göklen, the Tekke, the Yamūt, the Sariq, the Salor and Ersari. Across this vast expanse, tribal warfare, the plundering of caravans, and cattle- and slave-raiding were endemic.

The newly-crowned Āghā Muḥammad Shāh advanced into Khurāsān by way of Gurgān, halting in Astarābād to punish the Göklen Tūrkmen who had been raiding in that province.<sup>13</sup> He then left for Mashhad, while local khans, recognizing the impossibility of resistance, hastened to submit. All these chieftains were forced to hand over hostages, who were sent to Tehran. As Āghā Muḥammad Shāh approached Mashhad, Shāhrukh came to the Qājār camp, accompanied by a leading *mujtahid*, Mīrzā Mahdī, and one of his sons. Āghā Muḥammad Shāh sent his nephew, Ḥusain Qulī Khān (the younger brother of Faṭḥ ʿAlī Khān), to welcome the party, and the visitors, especially the *mujtahid*, were treated with respect. He then sent Sulaimān Khān Qājār, accompanied by Mīrzā Mahdī and 8,000 troops, to occupy the city and assure its inhabitants of the Shah's benevolence. The next day, Āghā Muḥammad Shāh entered Mashhad on foot (as Shāh ʿAbbās I had been accustomed to do) as a pilgrim to the shrine of Imām Rizā, weeping and kissing the earth. For the next twenty-three days, he continued his pilgrimage, seemingly oblivious of affairs of state. Then a change came over him. Orders were given for the exhumation of Nādir Shāh's remains, which were reburied with those of Karīm Khān Zand in Tehran; Shāhrukh was compelled to surrender any jewels formerly belonging to Nādir Shāh. Shāhrukh denied on oath that he had any left. Under torture, he revealed the whereabouts of some of the gems. He was tortured again, and handed over a great ruby which

<sup>12</sup> According to Morier, Ishāq Khān possessed 160,000 sheep, 20,000 camels and 6,000 brood-mares. *Op. cit.*, p. 239.

<sup>13</sup> It was perhaps in regard to this punitive expedition that Fraser heard the rumour that the Shah had "ordered that all the male captives should have the thumb of their right hand cut out by the socket, thus disabling them from using either the bow or the spear". Fraser, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

#### THE LAST MONTHS

Āghā Muḥammad Shāh had long coveted.<sup>14</sup> Shāhrukh and his family were then sent to Māzandarān. Shāhrukh himself died on the way, at Dāmghān, where his tomb still stands. He was sixty-three, and had ruled Khurāsān, in name at least, for forty-six years.

#### THE LAST MONTHS

The Shah had arrived in Mashhad in May 1796. He seems to have spent some time there, settling the affairs of Khurāsān. It is possible that he contemplated advancing against Herat, then an appendage of the Durrānī kingdom, but formerly a Safavid province and traditional residence of the Safavid *valī*<sup>c</sup> *abd*. He may also have contemplated, as Malcolm was told, an expedition against Bukhārā, to avenge the Mangit usurper Shāh Murād's treatment of the Qājārs of Marv. He sent an emissary to Bukhārā, addressed not to Shāh Murād, but to Abu'l-Ghāzī Khān, last ruler of the dispossessed Janid dynasty, demanding the return of Iranian slaves held in Bukhārā. Shāh Murād is said to have replied insultingly, but to have assembled the Iranian captives in Bukhārā so that they should be ready, if necessary, to be returned to Iran. Āghā Muḥammad Shāh is also supposed to have proposed at this time a combined attack on Bukhārā to Tīmūr Shāh Durrānī.

In the event, news of developments in the north-west called for immediate action. Catherine II, eager to extend Russia's hegemony beyond the Caucasus, and having a pretext in the Shah's treatment of her client, Erekle, had sent an expedition into the south-eastern Caucasus, under the command of Count Valerian Zubov. Its goal was to annex the Kura–Aras region and chastise the Shah. Zubov first occupied Darband and Bākū, the districts of Salyan and Tālīsh, and then Shamākhī and Ganja; it seemed that his final destination was Tabrīz. However, the death of Catherine in November 1796, and the accession of Paul I, opposed to his mother's Caucasian policies, led to the expedition's immediate recall. Meanwhile, the Shah had returned to Tehran, ordering the military commanders in the provinces to assemble there with their contingents the following spring. Āghā Muḥammad Shāh apparently contemplated an extended campaign, for he summoned Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān to Tehran and appointed him deputy (*Nā'ib al-Saltāna*) during his absence. In Dhu'l-Ḥijja 1211/June 1797, the Shah left Tehran, intending to march through Āzarbāijān to Qarābāgh, Shīrvān and Georgia, but in camp at Sulṭānīya, the news of Zubov's

<sup>14</sup> Malcolm, *op. cit.* II, pp. 290–1.



recall arrived. This led to a change of plan. It was less urgent to punish Georgia, and the Shah decided to deal first with the recalcitrant Ibrāhīm Khān of Qarābāgh, who had recently become a Russian protégé. The royal army therefore advanced from Miyāna to Ardabīl, and then moved towards Shūsha. At Ādīnabāzār, there appeared a delegation of notables from Shūsha, announcing that Ibrāhīm Khān and his family had fled into Dāghistān, and inviting the Shah to take possession of their city. In response to this unanticipated good fortune, the Shah left the army at Ādīnabāzār in the charge of Ḥājjī Ibrāhīm and Sulaimān Khān Qūyūnlū. The Shah's nephew, Ḥusain Qulī Khān, and Fath 'Alī Khān's sons, Ḥusain 'Alī Mīrzā and Muḥammad Qulī Mīrzā, were with them. The Shah set off with 5,000 horsemen and 3,000 infantry and, rapidly fording the Aras, entered Shūsha. He remained there three days until, disturbed one evening by a quarrel between two servants in his private quarters, he ordered their immediate execution. Ṣādiq Khān, leader of the Shaqāqī Kurds, was present. He tried to intercede for the servants, but the Shah was implacable, agreeing only to postpone their execution until the following morning, to avoid shedding blood on a Friday. He foolishly allowed the condemned men to continue attending him until he fell asleep, when they, joined by a third servant, stabbed him to death, on 21 Dhu'l-Ḥijja 1211/16 June 1797. They then fled to Ṣādiq Khān, bearing the treasure that the Shah had with him, including the *Daryā-yi Nūr* and the *Tāj-i Māh*. Ṣādiq Khān took the assassins under his protection, assumed charge of the regalia, and set out with his troops for Tabrīz. The Qājār ascendancy, to which the late Shah had devoted himself with such single-mindedness, was now to be put to the test.

Utter confusion followed the news of Āghā Muḥammad Shāh's death. In Shūsha, the royal troops dispersed, returning to the main camp, while the two officials who always accompanied the late Shah, the *Munshī al-Mamālik* and the *Īshīk Āqāsī Bāshī*, fled to Tehran by way of Nakhchivān and Marāgha. The inhabitants of Shūsha plundered the Shah's camp, while the local 'ulamā buried his remains. Confusion also reigned in the main camp at Ādīnabāzār. Ḥusain Qulī Khān and Sulaimān Khān Qūyūnlū set off with the sons of Fath 'Alī Khān for Tehran by way of Ṭālīsh, Shaft and Rasht. Ḥājjī Ibrāhīm took the main part of the army, including the Māzandarānī musketeers and the contingent from Fārs, and travelled via Ardabīl and Zanjān to Tehran. Meanwhile, Mīrzā Muḥammad Khān Develū, the governor of Tehran, closed the gates of the city and put the citadel in a state of defence until Fath 'Alī Khān could arrive from Shīrāz. The princes and nobles arriving from Shūsha encamped outside the walls but were denied entry.

Āghā Muḥammad Shāh's brother, 'Alī Qulī Khān, had been in Erivan at the time of the Shah's assassination. Marching via Khūy, Tabrīz and Marāgha, he approached Tehran from the west, but on being denied entry to the city, withdrew to the fortress of 'Alī Shāh on the river Karaj, where he proclaimed himself Shah. At the same time, Ṣādiq Khān and his Shaqāqī Kurds, who had left Shūsha for Tabrīz on the night of the Shah's assassination, marched on Sarāb and Qazvīn, in order to free the Khan's wife and son held captive there, while at the same time summoning followers from Suldūz, Marāgha, Tabrīz, Ardabīl and Mughān. Having appointed his brother, Muḥammad 'Alī Sulṭān, governor of Tabrīz, and another brother, Ja'far Khān, governor of Qarājadāgh, he himself settled down to besiege Qazvīn. In Qazvīn, the garrison played for time, holding out until the arrival of a relief force from Tehran. Meanwhile, Ṣādiq Khān ordered his brothers to take Khūy and, in an effort to raise an army to achieve this, the two chieftains assembled a mixed force including artisans and craftsmen pressed from the bazaars of Tabrīz, as well as recruits from Qarājadāgh.

News of the Shah's murder did not reach Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān in Shīrāz until ten days after it had happened. He made the necessary arrangements, appointing his eldest son, the nine-year-old Muḥammad 'Alī Mīrzā, nominal beglerbegī of Fārs, observed three days of mourning, and then left for Tehran. Some distance short of Ray, he was joined by Ḥājī Ibrāhīm, Ḥusain Qulī Khān, and the loyal princes and he was informed of the rebellion of his uncle, 'Alī Qulī Khān. The latter fell into his nephew's hands, was blinded, and then allowed to live in retirement at Bārfarūsh, where he died in 1240/1824-5. Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān made his formal entry into Tehran on 20 Ṣafar 1212/15 August 1797.

Ṣādiq Khān Shaqāqī was still besieging Qazvīn, so Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān marched on the city with as large a force as he could muster. Ṣādiq Khān advanced to meet him at Khāk-i 'Alī, about thirty miles east of Qazvīn, and after a hard-fought engagement, the Kurd's forces were dispersed with heavy losses, and the royal army entered Qazvīn. Ṣādiq Khān and his remaining men fled to Sarāb, intending to go to Āzarbāijān, where he believed that his brothers had strengthened the fortifications of Tabrīz and gained possession of Khūy. In Sarāb, however, he met them both, fugitives like himself. The governor of Khūy, Ja'far Khān Dunbulī, and his brother, the former governor of Tabrīz, Ḥusain Khān Dunbulī, had united their Kurdish followers, scattered in the confusion following Āghā Muḥammad Shāh's death, and defeated Ṣādiq Khān's brothers. Ṣādiq Khān had to submit, although he was in a strong position, in that he still had Āghā Muḥammad Shāh's crown-jewels. Faṭḥ 'Alī Khān, who had come to

Zanjān intending to restore order in Āzarbāijān, agreed that, in return for the jewels, Šādiq Khān be pardoned. With his supporters killed or dispersed, the jewels in themselves were of little use to Šādiq Khān and, in his own districts, the Shaqāqī Kurds were held in check by their Dunbulī rivals. Šādiq Khān made a good bargain, gaining the districts of Sarāb and Garmrūd. Meanwhile, Faṭḥ ʿAlī Khān, learning that plague was ravaging Āzarbāijān, preferred to settle its affairs from a distance. The recalcitrant chieftains submitted, and received honours and offices. Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān Qūyūnlū, Āghā Muḥammad's maternal cousin, was re-appointed governor of Erivan, which he was to hold against the Russians in 1804, and Jaʿfar Khān Dunbulī was rewarded with the governorships of Tabrīz and Khūy. Faṭḥ ʿAlī Khān then returned to Tehran, which he reached in Jumādā II 1212/November–December 1797.

His obligations to his dead uncle were now fulfilled. Two of the late Shah's assassins had been seized when the Qājār troops entered Qazvīn. One was cut to pieces by Faṭḥ ʿAlī Khān's brother; the other was dismembered by the Shah's executioner. The third, captured later near Kirmānshāh, was burnt to death in Tehran. Orders were sent to Ibrāhīm Khān, now back in Shūsha, to exhume the body of Āghā Muḥammad Shāh and send it with suitable honours to Tehran, where it rested for three days in the shrine of Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīm, to the south of the city. A great procession, led by Muḥammad ʿAlī Khān Qūyūnlū, a close kinsman of the late Shah, with an escort of 2,000 horsemen, then accompanied the corpse to Najaf, where the cortège was received by the Pasha of Baghdad. Like Shāh ʿAbbās I, Āghā Muḥammad Shāh was buried in the *ḥaram* of the Imām ʿAlī, where his tomb came to be venerated as that of a *shahīd* (martyr) who had died waging *jihād* against the unbelievers. However, one pilgrim who visited the tomb shortly afterwards was not impressed: "On the outside of the mausoleum, near the door, and under the path-way, are deposited the remains of Shah Abbass, of Persia: and on the other side of the building, adjacent to the platform on which prayers are said, is a small apartment, in which is the tomb of Mohammad Khan Kajar, late king of Persia, formed of a single block of white marble, on which they constantly burn the wood of aloes, and every night light up camphire tapers in silver candlesticks; and, during both the day and the night, several devout persons are perpetually employed in chaunting the Koran. All this pomp and state at the tomb of Mohammed Khan is highly improper in the vicinity of the holy shrine, and can only be attributed to the ignorance and rusticity of his descendants."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Mīrzā Abū Ṭālib Khān, *Travels* II, pp. 345–6.

On 3 Shawāl 1212/21 March 1798, which was both Naurūz and the ʿĪd al-Fiṭr, Faṭḥ ʿAlī Khān crowned himself Shah in the Gulistān Palace in Tehran. Opposition to his succession was not yet over. That summer, Ṣādiq Khān Shaqāqī and Jaʿfar Khān Dunbulī rebelled, and hardly had the one submitted and the other fled into Ottoman territory, before the Shah’s brother, Ḥusain Qulī Khān, now beglerbegī of Fārs, revolted. Nevertheless, Faṭḥ ʿAlī Shāh was now firmly seated upon his throne, and his brother’s rebellion came to nothing. He had little statesmanship or charisma, but his rule was secure. Āghā Muḥammad Shāh’s ambitions had been fulfilled: the Qājārs, in the person of his favourite nephew, were finally established on the throne of the Safavids.

It is difficult to view the reign of Āghā Muḥammad Khān in perspective. The entire plateau was rife with warfare. The Shah himself was constantly on the move. The sources seem little more than accounts of a string of engagements. Scarcely any European travellers visited Qājār Iran before the reign of Faṭḥ ʿAlī Shāh or left descriptions of what they saw, while the grotesque anecdotes of Āghā Muḥammad Shāh’s cruelty do little to give a balanced view of events of the period.

Āghā Muḥammad Khān was a man who governed from the saddle, and his leadership was tenacious rather than charismatic. As a military commander he was undoubtedly able; it is worth recalling Malcolm’s assessment of his troops, written not long after his death: “His army was inured to fatigue, and regularly paid; he had introduced excellent arrangement into all its Departments, and his known severity occasioned the utmost alacrity and promptness in the execution of orders, and had he lived a few more years, it is difficult to conjecture the progress of his arms.”<sup>16</sup> Beside this opinion may be placed a second, also by a Briton, James Baillie Fraser: “Aga Mahomed had likewise the talent of forming good and brave troops. His active and ambitious disposition kept his army constantly engaged; and they acquired a veteran hardihood and expertness, that rendered them superior to any other Asiatic troops.”<sup>17</sup>

Thus, Āghā Muḥammad Shāh’s success was evidently due to a combination of skilful military organization, the ability to manipulate and control shifting rivalries and alliances among the tribes, and the qualities of a tireless, far-sighted and prudent commander in the field. While no precise figures for the Qājār army of the late 18th century exist, those obtained by Malcolm in 1801 reflect the scale of the military establishment in the preceding reign. Malcolm mentions 35,000 regular cavalry and 15,000 infantry, a standing army paid from the central

<sup>16</sup> Malcolm, “Memorandum”, *Journal of the Central Asian Society* xvi, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> Fraser, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

treasury.<sup>18</sup> In addition, levies of both cavalry and infantry could be summoned from the provinces and tribes when needed. There was an ineffective artillery arm, manned mainly by Georgian and Armenian gunners, which Malcolm thought capable of improvement. There were also 200 *zamburaks* (swivel-guns mounted on camels), which were judged to be purely ceremonial.<sup>19</sup>

The regular cavalry included the royal *ghulāms* (household cavalry), mainly recruited from the Astarābād region, while the most valuable infantry were the Māzandarānī *tufangchīs* (musketeers). Āghā MuḤammad Shāh was said to have called them “the Shah’s bodyshirt” (*pīrāhan-i tan-i shāh*), and in times of danger, he slept in their midst.<sup>20</sup> Writing during the middle years of the next reign, Fraser states that the provinces of Māzandarān and Astarābād had their revenues commuted to the provision of 12,000 *tufangchīs* and 4,000 cavalry.<sup>21</sup>

Āghā MuḤammad Shāh employed the tactics of his own Qājār tribe and their Türkmen neighbours, in which the surprise attack, encirclement from the rear, and maximum mobility all featured. He rarely lost an engagement, but had the reputation of only giving battle when reasonably sure of victory. His troops lived off the country when in enemy territory and, wherever appropriate, he employed a “scorched earth” policy to deny the enemy supplies.<sup>22</sup> He knew that his soldiers were capable of spontaneous feats of courage and daring, but, if confronted by resolute opponents, tended to lack tenacity.<sup>23</sup> During Count Zubov’s invasion in 1211–12/1797, he told Ḥājji Ibrāhīm that while he intended to harry the Russians mercilessly, he would never send his troops into close combat with the Russian infantry, because of their formidable fire-power and unyielding ranks; he took this decision long before he entered the field. When caution or retreat were needed, or a strategy required modification, he would quickly appreciate the situation: as Ḥājji Ibrāhīm told the British, Āghā MuḤammad Shāh was a brave enough leader in battle, but his “head . . . never left work for his hand!”<sup>24</sup> His re-uniting of the Iranian plateau under a single rule owed as much to his astuteness as to his military skill.

A central issue for Āghā MuḤammad Shāh was the tribal arithmetic of eighteenth-century Iran. Since the overthrow of the Safavids, every contender

<sup>18</sup> Morier heard that, in order to prevent peculation of his soldiers’ wages, the Shah paid his troops with his own hand. *Second Journey*, p. 238. <sup>19</sup> Malcolm, “Memorandum”, pp. 20–1.

<sup>20</sup> Fraser, *Winter’s Journey* II, p. 481. <sup>21</sup> Fraser, *Khorassan*, p. 228.

<sup>22</sup> Thus, when the Shah’s troops were advancing against Erivan in 1209–10/1795, it was said that Iranian Muslims from Qarābāgh, Nakhchivān and Erivan fled into Gurjistān along with Armenians, fearing the depredations of his troops. Artemi, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

<sup>23</sup> Artemi declared: “The Persians indeed attack like lions but they exert their strength in the first blow, and if this fails, they return home.” *Ibid*, p. 205. <sup>24</sup> Malcolm, *History* II, p. 302.

for power had needed an adequate base among these groups. They had constituted the basis of Nādir Shāh's régime, and had also been the cause of its disintegration. In order to succeed, Āghā Muḥammad Shāh had to create a network of tribal alliances and allegiances. His own Qājār tribe, although not numerous, were wardens of the north-eastern marches and enjoyed a reputation for their fighting skill. With Gurgān cut off from the rest of Iran, and difficult to attack from the south, his original home-base was relatively secure, especially as the Qājārs of Astarābād generally enjoyed good relations with the Türkmen tribes of the south-western Qara-Qum. Unpredictable as the Türkmens might be, the Yamūt had, on more than one occasion, provided sanctuary and support to Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān and his son, and been rewarded accordingly with opportunities for raiding with the Qājārs, with access to superior pastures and with marriage alliances with the Qājārs. Thus, the Yamūt were permitted to move from the arid banks of the Atrak to the fertile Gurgān plain, where the villages along the Qara Sū were allotted to them as *tuyūl*, thus provoking strife between the newcomers and the settled cultivators of the Atak.<sup>25</sup> However, the Türkmens were always uncertain neighbours and, on at least one occasion towards the end of the reign, Āghā Muḥammad Shāh, exasperated by the depredations of the Göklen in northern Khurāsān, severely punished them during his 1210–11/1796 campaign in that province.

From Gurgān, he first turned his attention to Māzandarān, and recruited there those Māzandarānī tufangchīs whom he so highly prized. Yet even with them and his Türkmen allies, he still lacked the tribal following that the Zands possessed. To compensate, he methodically established a network of clients and allies among the tribal leaders of the north and west, especially in the Khamsa region of 'Irāq-i 'Ajam and in Āzarbāijān. This frequently involved choosing between two rival groups. His support of the Dunbulī Kurds rather than their Shaqāqī Kurdish rivals in Āzarbāijān exemplifies this. It also involved skilful use of threats and rewards: on the one hand, the practice of taking hostages from the families of tribal leaders and, on the other, offering them marriages into the ruling house. Tribes could be won over by partnership with the victorious Qājārs, with opportunities for plunder, for settling old scores with rivals, and for better grazing grounds. They could likewise be coerced by threatening withdrawal of such prospects, the promotion of a rival tribe or faction, and ultimately, punitive measures such as the confiscation of livestock or forcible eviction. In Māzandarān, for example, three distinct tribal groups were settled in

<sup>25</sup> Rabino, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

the province by Āghā Muḥammad Shāh, either by persuasion or force: the ʿAbd al-Malikī, the Kurd-u-Turk, and the Khwājavand. The ʿAbd al-Malikī, said to have been 4,000 Qashqāʾī families which had originally opposed the Qājār advance into the south, were moved to Nūr and Kujūr around 1205–6/1791, and later transferred to the area between Ashraf and Farahābād. The Kurd-u-Turk, a composite group dominated by Mukrī Kurds from Sāuj Bulāgh in Āzarbāijān, and various Turkish tribes from Khurāsān, were settled around Sārī. The Khwājavand, originally from the Khurrāmābād region, were first located north of Tehran, but were later transferred to the Tunakābun district.

To the west, in the Khamsa region of ʿIrāq-i ʿAjam, which was among the earliest conquests of the Qājārs south of the Alburz, the Turkish Īnāllū Shāhsevan and the Baghdādī Shāhsevan were both apparently relocated in the Sāva and Kharaqān districts.<sup>26</sup> Further west still, he formed alliances with the Mukrī Kurds of Sāuj Bulāgh, the Dunbulī Kurds of Khūy, and the Qarāgūzlū Turks of Hamadān, to name only three. Even more important was the close collaboration between the Qājārs and the Vālīs of Ardalān, an alliance first formulated during the lifetime of Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Qājār, and thereafter sedulously pursued by Āghā Muḥammad Shāh and Faṭḥ ʿAlī Shāh.

In the middle decade of the 18th century, the ruling Vālī, Ḥasan ʿAlī Khān, had found himself embroiled in two feuds: with the Bābān Kurdish chieftain, Selim Pāshā, and in the rivalries of Āzād Khān the Afghan, Karīm Khān Zand and ʿAlī Mardān Khān Bakhtiyārī. He was eventually killed by Selim Pāshā, but his son, Khusrau Khān, a confidant and companion of Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Qājār, fought his way into the Vālī's capital of Senna, now Sanandaj, and was acclaimed Vālī in Muḥarram 1168/October–November 1754. Shortly thereafter, he sustained a brief siege by the forces of Āzād Khān, which were driven off by a Qājār relief-column. Āzād Khān withdrew northwards, and Khusrau Khān, coming out of Sanandaj, pursued him vigorously as far as Garrūs and defeated him, winning great booty, as well as the respect of his Qājār ally. Thereafter, for more than thirty years (1168–76/174–62 and 1179–1204/1765–89), Khusrau Khān remained one of the most prominent figures in western Iran, and a staunch ally of Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān until the latter's death in 1172/1759. Thereafter, he was compelled to submit to Karīm Khān Zand, who confirmed him as Vālī, enabling him to consolidate his position in Ardalān until Karīm Khān's death in 1193/1779. Under Karīm Khān's successors, however, he became restless. Mention has already been made of his eventual submission to Āghā Muḥammad

<sup>26</sup> Field, *Contributions*, xxix, pts. 1 & 2, pp. 167–8, 171; Rabino, *op. cit.*, pp. 11–12.

Khān, and the events leading up to it (see p. 119 *supra*). Khusrau Khān died in 1204/1789. Following the brief rule of two successors, the vilāyat passed to his younger son, Amān-Allāh (1214/1799), whose long tenure of office, partly coinciding with the governorship of Kirmānshāh province by Fath ʿAlī Shāh's eldest son, Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā, confirmed in the third generation the mutual advantages enjoyed by both parties to the Qājār-Ardalān alliance.

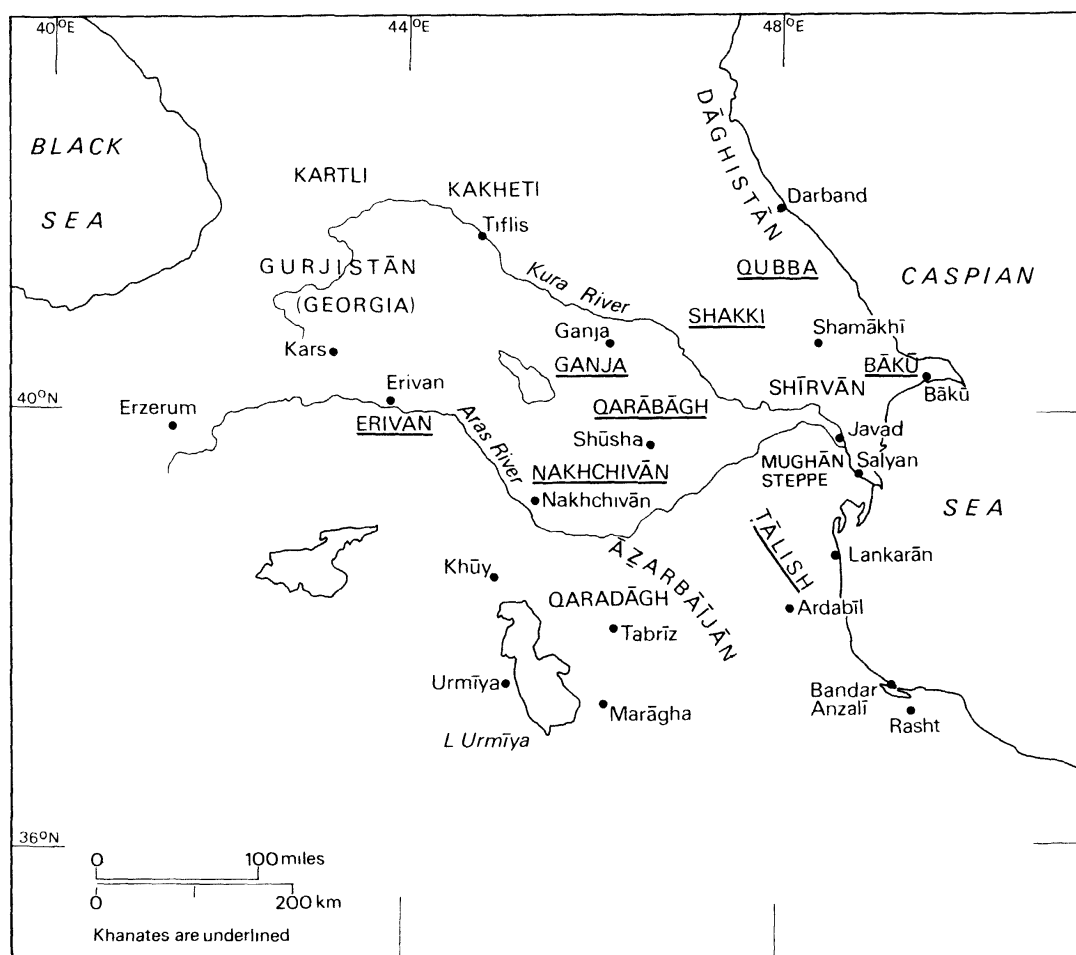
The civil administration of Iran during the reign of Āghā Muḥammad Shāh appears rudimentary. The Shah was mainly preoccupied with military matters.<sup>27</sup> His court was almost invariably his tent, and it has been seen that his chief minister, Ḥājji Ibrāhīm, was also often in the field, as were the secretaries and those answerable to the Shah for the fisc. For years, Āghā Muḥammad Shāh relied upon only two senior officials to handle affairs of state. These were Mīrzā Ismāʿīl, a former household servant of the Qājārs, who acted as *mustaufi* (chief revenue officer), and Mīrzā Asad-Allāh Nūrī, from the district of Nūr in Māzandarān, who served as *lashkar-navīs* (military paymaster). Mīrzā Ismāʿīl endeavoured to establish a secure revenue after decades of fiscal mismanagement but, as ʿAbd-Allāh Mustaufi says, in describing his ancestor Mīrzā Ismāʿīl's experiences in Āghā Muḥammad Khān's service, "Āghā Muḥammad was himself the treasurer, minister of finance and *sāhib-i dīvān* of his own government."<sup>28</sup> Not until 1209/1794–5 did he acquire a principal vazīr in the traditional sense, when Ḥājji Ibrāhīm became the *Iʿtimād al-Daula*.

Āghā Muḥammad Shāh recruited officials such as he needed from any available source. The former Zand administration was not excluded and provided, among others, Ḥājji Ibrāhīm and Mīrzā Buzurg, the *Qāʾim-Maqām* of the next reign. What he required in his agents was effectiveness and loyalty. A typical example was Ḥājji Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān, an illiterate tradesman whom he appointed beglerbegī of Iṣfahān, and who subsequently rose even higher. As Morier relates: "He was originally a green-grocer of Ispahan, of which city he and his family are natives. His first rise from this humble station was to become Kat Khoda (or deputy) of his *mahal*, or division; his next, to become that of a larger *mahal*; he was then promoted to be the *Kelanter*, or mayor, of the city; and thence he became the *Thaubit*, or Chief, of a rich and extensive district near Ispahan, where he acquired great reputation for his good government. He afterwards made himself acceptable in the eyes of the late King [Āghā Muḥammad Shāh], by a large *peesb-kesb*, or present; and as the then Governor of Ispahan was a man of dissolute life, oppressive and unjust, he succeeded in

<sup>27</sup> Āghā Muḥammad Khān is said to have despised bureaucrats as *firāi-khūr* (milksores). ʿAbd-Allāh Mustaufi, *Sharḥ-i Zindagānī-yi Man*, 2nd. ed., Tehran, n.d., 1, pp. 5, 11. <sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12.



## ĀGHĀ MUḤAMMAD KHĀN AND THE QĀJĀRS



Map 4. Northwestern Iran during the lifetime of Āghā MuḤammad Khān Qājār

deposing him, and was himself appointed the *Beglarbeg*: here, from his intimate knowledge of the markets, and of all the resources of the city, and of its inhabitants, he managed to create a larger revenue than had ever before been collected.”<sup>29</sup>

Provincial administration in the late 18th century followed the precedents of Safavid times: *beglerbegīs* were appointed to provinces, and *ḥākims* to less important charges; city government was divided between the *kalāntar* and the *dārūgha*; and in the *maḥals* (city quarters), the grievances of the people were addressed to the *kadkhudā*. The manner of control in either cities or countryside did not apparently undergo any radical change during the reign of Āghā MuḤammad Shāh. Of greater significance for the population was the fact that no

<sup>29</sup> Morier, *Second Journey*, p. 131.

government within living memory had so effectively enforced its will. Āghā Muḥammad Shāh seems to have cherished a belief in his rôle as a traditional *Shāhanshāh*, the fount of justice and protector of the poor. Wide stretches of the country were forcibly pacified, the servants of the government were compelled to exercise moderation in their demands, the roads were made safe for merchants, and justice was meted out from the throne, albeit with a heavy hand. Malcolm, reporting opinion in Iran shortly after Āghā Muḥammad Shāh's death, states that, "Aga Mahomed Khan was rigid in the administration of justice. He punished corruption in the magistrates, whenever it was detected. Such as committed crimes which according to the Koran merited death, were seldom forgiven; and he never pardoned persons who in any shape disturbed the tranquillity of his dominions . . . during the latter years of his reign commerce revived in every quarter. This was not more the consequence of his justice, than of the general security which his rule inspired; and of the extinction, through the severity of his punishments, of those bands of robbers with which the country had before been infested. To the farmers and cultivators he gave no further protection than what they derived from the terror of his name; but that was considerable: from the collector of a district to the governor of a province, all dreaded a complaint to a monarch, by whom the slightest deviations in those who exercised power, were often visited by the most dreadful punishments."<sup>30</sup>

It is unclear whether Āghā Muḥammad Shāh pursued a deliberate policy in his dealings with the Shī'ī *ʿulamā*. Brought up in the house of a Sayyid and for a time passed off as his son, he showed respect for the *ʿulamā* throughout his life and supported them with grants and endowments.<sup>31</sup> His ostensible piety, notwithstanding his reputation as a wine-bibber, certainly won their approval. A chronicle describes him, in 1210–11/1796, approaching the shrine of the Eighth Imām on foot: ". . . displaying signs of weakness, poverty, humility, and submissiveness, and shedding tears, he walked to the shrine and kissed the blessed soil".<sup>32</sup> Elsewhere, the same source, commenting upon his death, declares: "All his life he had honored the Sharia. As long as he lived he performed his prayers at the time prescribed, and each midnight, though he passed the day in toil and exertion, he rose to offer a prayer."<sup>33</sup>

Another chronicle relates how, when recovering from an illness, he dreamt that he saw a figure dressed as a *mullā*. He claimed that this experience fortified the sense which he had of his royal mission. He may, like the late Muḥammad

<sup>30</sup> Malcolm, *History* II, pp. 206, 212.

<sup>31</sup> Algar, *Religion*, pp. 42–3.

<sup>32</sup> Ḥasan-i Fasā'ī, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p. 74.

Rizā Shāh,<sup>34</sup> have supposed his visitor to have been Ḥaẓrat ʿAlī, or perhaps the Eighth or Twelfth Imām, both of whose names were inscribed on his coinage, as they were on that of most rulers from the time of Shāh Ṭahmāsp II onwards.<sup>35</sup>

Āghā Muḥammad Shāh's patronage of Islamic institutions indicates an awareness of the duties of a Shīʿī ruler. In Tehran, he ordered the construction of the Masjid-i Shāh, Shah's mosque, and in Mashhad, the renovation of the shrine. Āghā Muḥammad Shāh also commissioned some secular building, less for aesthetic than for practical purposes. In Astarābād, he repaired or strengthened the walls, cleared the ditch, erected public buildings, including a palace for the beglerbegī, and generally improved the town's amenities.<sup>36</sup> Similar repairs and improvements were undertaken at Bārfarūsh (Bābul) and Ashraf, and especially at Sārī, where he built himself a palace.<sup>37</sup> In general, however, a lifetime of campaigning, followed by a comparatively brief reign, did not permit much patronage of architecture or the arts. Perhaps his most enduring legacy is Tehran itself, although little remains of the city as it was in his lifetime.

Early in the course of establishing his power, Āghā Muḥammad Shāh was compelled to address the question of the succession. He, of course, had no issue, but in choosing a successor, he had to avoid further exacerbating the internecine feuding among the Qājār clans. In addition to the rivalry between the Yūkhārī-bāsh and Ashāqa-bāsh Qājārs, there had also been the destructive feud between the Qūyūnlū and the Develū clans among the latter. These conflicts had to be resolved for Qājār rule to survive. Among his siblings, only Ḥusain Qulī Khān was a full-brother, and hence his obvious heir, but he predeceased the monarch. Fortunately he left sons, Faṭḥ ʿAlī Khān and Ḥusain Qulī Khān. As soon as Āghā Muḥammad Khān escaped captivity in Shīrāz in 1192-3/1779, he seems to have determined that Faṭḥ ʿAlī Khān should be his heir, and in 1196/1781-2, he arranged his nephew's marriage to the daughter of Faṭḥ ʿAlī Khān Develū, thereby binding the rival families of Qūyūnlū and Develū in a marriage alliance. He further promoted this alliance through the marriage of his grandson, Faṭḥ ʿAlī Shāh's son, ʿAbbās Mīrzā, to a Develū Qājār girl in 1216-17/1802, and there is other evidence<sup>38</sup> of Āghā Muḥammad Shāh's foresight in respect of the succession. All his hopes for the future of his dynasty were thus linked to the line of ʿAbbās Mīrzā and his descendants. Indeed a European traveller in Iran during the reign of Faṭḥ ʿAlī Shāh heard the rumour that, had Āghā Muḥammad Khān

<sup>34</sup> Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, *Mission for My Country* (London, 1961), pp. 54-5.

<sup>35</sup> Rabino, *Coins*, pp. 61-2. <sup>36</sup> Morier, *Second Journey*, pp. 367-77.

<sup>37</sup> Forster, *Journey II*, p. 198; Fraser, *Travels*, pp. 41-2.

<sup>38</sup> Ḥasan-i Fasāʾī, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

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lived longer, he would have bypassed the succession of his nephew in favour of ʿAbbās Mīrzā.<sup>39</sup> It was this preoccupation with neutralizing inter-tribal feuds among the Qājārs, as well as his dream of a Qūyūnlū ruling house which led to the exclusion from the succession of Faṭḥ ʿAlī Shāh's eldest son, Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā, the offspring of a Georgian concubine, who was perhaps the ablest of Faṭḥ ʿAlī Shāh's sons and who, had he lived and reigned, might have injected into the government of the kingdom some of his great-uncle's wilful energy and prudent foresight.

<sup>39</sup> Drouville, *Voyages* I, p. 237.

## CHAPTER 4

### IRAN DURING THE REIGNS OF FATH ʿALĪ SHĀH AND MUḤAMMAD SHĀH

The kingdom which Fath ʿAlī Shāh inherited in 1797 resembled an estate long neglected by successive owners. Indeed it had been for the best part of a century. Had Fath ʿAlī Shah wondered, as he presided over the first New Year festival of a long reign of thirty-seven years, what were the resources of his inheritance in manpower or revenues, it is doubtful whether anyone near him could have provided the requisite information, or even delineated the frontiers of his kingdom. The claim or aspiration was that his domain equalled that of his Safavid predecessors in the days of their greatness; certainly it exceeded the bounds of present-day Iran. In reality, however, the royal writ ran far from smoothly, authority emanating from Tehran but repeatedly interrupted. In much of Khurāsān, or the more remote marches of the Lur, Türkmen or Balūch country, the Shah was scarcely even nominal ruler. Yet in spite of the practical constraints upon his exercise of power and the humiliation of two defeats suffered at the hands of Russia which entailed a loss of territory, the close of Fath ʿAlī Shāh's reign did see the definitive re-establishment of a "Royaume de Perse".

Early 19th-century European observers of Iran doubted whether the Shah's government had the will or the means to refurbish this derelict estate; it is unlikely that either the Shah or his kinsmen thought in terms of "improving" the kingdom's resources as a contemporary English Whig landowner would have done. Nevertheless, it is a fact that Fath ʿAlī Shāh's reign ultimately afforded sufficient order and effective government to make possible some economic recovery. Contemporary Europeans criticized the early Qājārs for corruption, brutality, and ineptitude, but notwithstanding what, measured against contemporary European expectations of how states should be managed, were vices in the bureaucracy, Fath ʿAlī Shāh's Iran was more tranquil and prosperous than it had been at any time since Safavid rule had ceased to be effective.

Fath ʿAlī Shāh seems to have aimed at ruling in accordance with those concepts of Iranian *Shāhanshāhī* which the age of the Safavids had come to symbolize. He did not possess the sacral charisma enjoyed by the descendants of

Shāh Ismāʿīl I, but he stressed his family's links with the heroic past of the Oghuz, with the migrations of the Türkmens in the days of the Īl-Khāns and the Āq Qūyūnlū, and with the age of Qizilbāsh hegemony. Court chroniclers lent their eloquence to the historicity of this tribal heritage. Bas-reliefs of Fath ʿAlī Shāh and his sons were carved on rock faces in the Sasanian style at Rayy and Tāq-i Bustān to proclaim the continuity of the monarchical tradition. Fath ʿAlī Shāh was following in his uncle's footsteps, but outstripped his predecessor in articulating regal splendour and pride. Court-painters celebrated their master's greatness in the life-size portraits, in the miniatures of him trampling on Russian corpses while survivors fled in terror at the mere sight of him, and in the elegant hunting-scenes on pen-cases and *huqqa*-bowls (water pipe bowls).

In particular, uncertain frontiers posed problems. In the western Zagros region, for example, the nomadic population freely moved between the territories of the Shah and those of the Ottoman Sultan. As beglerbegī of Kirmānshāh, Luristān and Khūzistān, Fath ʿAlī Shāh's eldest son, Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā, made sporadic raids into areas which were supposedly part of the Ottoman *vilāyat* of Baghdad, just as his brother, ʿAbbās Mīrzā, beglerbegī of Āzarbāijān, did into the *vilāyats* of Van and Erzerum. No one knew exactly where the lines of the frontier ran. They still awaited negotiation and agreement between the two governments.

In their raids across the Ottoman frontier, both princes asserted claims to territory which in Safavid times (if only for brief periods) had been Iranian. It was the same in the east: Herat and Qandahar had been important provinces of the Safavid kingdom. Fath ʿAlī Shāh assumed that both were included in his inheritance. To Safavid precedents he could add those of Nādir Shāh's conquests. On one occasion, asked by the Russians to help to punish the Khivans for harassing Russian merchants, he declared that, in order to campaign against Khiva, he must first, like Nādir Shāh, control Herat, Balkh and Bukhārā.<sup>1</sup>

In the east, attempts to advance the frontier were repelled by the Durrānī rulers of Afghanistan; in the west, by the Pashas of Baghdad, Van and Erzerum. More complicated was the situation on the Caucasian marches beyond the river Aras. Although, during the 1720s, Iranians, Ottomans and Russians had confronted each other in this ethnically and culturally diverse region, the Shahs of Iran had claimed suzerainty over some of the local rulers since the time of Shāh Ismāʿīl I (A.D. 1501–24). These claims had been reasserted by Nādir Shāh, by Karīm Khān Zand and by Aghā Muḥammad Khān. Even when rulers on the

<sup>1</sup> See Avery, "An Enquiry", p. 24.

plateau lacked the means to effect suzerainty beyond the Aras, the neighbouring Khanates were still regarded as Iranian dependencies. Naturally, it was those Khanates located closest to the province of Āzarbāijān which most frequently experienced attempts to re-impose Iranian suzerainty: the Khanates of Erivan, Nakhchivān and Qarābāgh across the Aras, and the cis-Aras Khanate of Ṭālīsh, with its administrative headquarters located at Lankarān and therefore very vulnerable to pressure, either from the direction of Tabrīz or Rasht. Beyond the Khanate of Qarābāgh, the Khān of Ganja and the Vālī of Gurjīstān (ruler of the Kartli-Kakheti kingdom of south-east Georgia), although less accessible for purposes of coercion, were also regarded as the Shah's vassals, as were the Khāns of Shakki and Shīrvān, north of the Kura river. The contacts between Iran and the Khanates of Bākū and Qubba, however, were more tenuous and consisted mainly of maritime commercial links with Anzalī and Rasht.

The effectiveness of these somewhat haphazard assertions of suzerainty depended on the ability of a particular Shah to make his will felt, and the determination of the local khans to evade obligations they regarded as onerous. This situation completely changed in the second half of the 18th century, when the Russians advanced into the Caucasus and Erekle, Vālī of Gurjīstān, voluntarily submitted to Catherine II in 1783 in the Treaty of Georgievsk. Āghā MuḤammad Khān regarded this as an act of defiance. It led to his punitive raid against Tiflis in 1795, which provoked Russian retaliation. Hence, by the end of the century, the Russians were seeking a clearly-defined defensive frontier with Iran. The frontier they envisaged would have to be the line of either the river Kura or the Aras. In retrospect, Russian expansion into the southern Caucasus region appears inevitable, but in Fath ʿAlī Shāh's view of the world, the Khanates belonged wholly to Iran. Āghā MuḤammad Khān, as proof of his suzerainty over them, had minted gold and silver coins in Erivan, and silver ones in Ganja, Nukha (the capital of Shakki) and Shamīkhā (the capital of Shirvan), just as he had done in Yazd, Iṣfahān or Tabrīz. There was nothing peculiar in this: he regarded them all, as the Safavids and Nādir Shāh had done, as Iranian cities. Fath ʿAlī Shāh did the same. Before the outbreak of war with Russia in 1804, he struck gold and silver coins at the Erivan and Ganja mints, and silver ones at Nukha. Until 1804 it is probable that neither the Shah nor his entourage fully apprehended the extent of the Russian threat. It would simply be perceived in terms of the type of trans-border skirmishing in which the Iranians engaged with their other neighbours, while it would be taken as axiomatic that local rulers in such circumstances would attempt to play off one potential overlord against another. It is unlikely that anyone in Tehran then imagined that the

Russian government in Saint Petersburg might be planning outright annexation, or that the pro-consular ambitions of local Russian commanders in the field would tend to promote just such an outcome. It was the manner of his dealings with the Russians as much as anything else that made contemporary British observers assume that Fath ʿAlī Shāh lived in a world of fantasy. Ignorant of the world beyond his frontiers he certainly was, but to blame him for failure to anticipate the subsequent course of Russian expansionism is to read back into the early years of the reign subsequent developments which few, around 1800, could have predicted.

When Fath ʿAlī Shāh became king, he was about twenty-six years old. Born in the early 1770s, when Karīm Khān Zand was in control of the greater part of western and central Iran, he grew up in that period when Āghā MuḤammad Khān was making an apparently desperate bid to topple Zand hegemony. He doubtless experienced the vicissitudes characteristic of such a time. Chosen by his forbidding uncle at an early age to be his heir, by the time he acquired the throne he had already seen a decade of hard campaigning. It cannot have been an easy apprenticeship. Āghā MuḤammad Khān was pitiless towards his enemies, but he could be no less implacable towards his own kin. The future Shah must more than once have trembled for his head during his uncle's terrible rages. But whatever the consequences of such an upbringing, by the time of his accession Fath ʿAlī Shāh had come to evince certain quite distinctive traits. It was not that he could not exert himself in a crisis (which he would continue to do, intermittently, down to the closing months of the reign), but that he preferred to enjoy to the full what had been toiled for so strenuously: to rule with a magnificence which the ceremony of the court was designed to enhance to the uttermost. Malcolm wrote that "On extraordinary occasions nothing can exceed the splendour of the Persian court. It presents a scene of the greatest magnificence, regulated by the most disciplined order. There is no part of the government to which so much attention is paid as the strictest maintenance of those forms and ceremonies, which are deemed essential to the power and glory of the monarch."<sup>2</sup> Sometimes, Fath ʿAlī Shāh showed cruelty reminiscent of Āghā MuḤammad Khān's, as in his treatment of his first prime minister. He also consistently displayed the avarice characteristic of his uncle, but he lacked the latter's extraordinary energy, and his personal indifference to ostentatious luxury. Fath ʿAlī Shāh was indolent, self-indulgent, vain and capricious; but his indolence generally ensured that he was not the scourge to those close to him that his

<sup>2</sup> Malcolm, *History* II, p. 555.



predecessor had been. To his credit, all observers agreed that he looked every inch a king, strikingly handsome, with a typical Qājār physiognomy. In most respects he was conventional. He was dignified and affable and, while showing conventional piety, a pleasure-seeker. James Baillie Fraser wrote that “. . . his dispositions are by no means bad: for a Persian monarch he is neither considered cruel, nor disposed to injustice; he is sincere in his religious professions”. Fraser goes on to say that the king seldom took wines or spirits and was not debauched. He had, however, “. . . no title to courage; on the contrary he is reported to have behaved in a very questionable manner on the few occasions where he was required to face danger”. And he was certainly not generous. Fraser thought him “. . . possessed of very little talent, and no strength of mind; sufficiently calculated to live as a respectable private character, but quite unfit to be the king of such a country; he could neither have succeeded to the throne, nor kept his seat there had not his powerful and crafty uncle worked for him, removing by force or guile every individual likely to give him trouble, and had not the surrounding countries been so circumstanced that no danger could reach him from abroad”.<sup>3</sup>

The Shah’s intelligence remains an open question. James Morier, the creator of *Hājji Bābā of Isfahān*, and Alexander Burnes in his mocking account of his own reception in the royal durbar, represent him almost as a figure of fun in the manner of one of Rossini’s comic-opera Pashas. Other Europeans who met him found him vivacious and inquisitive; and Malcolm thought that Fath ʿAlī Shāh had, “by the comparative mildness and justice of his rule entitled himself to a high rank among the Kings of Persia”.<sup>4</sup>

Fath ʿAlī Shāh reigned for nearly four decades, and although he was twice defeated by the Russians and had to suffer the deviousness of European diplomats, such matters were temporary aggravations as compared with the ceaseless quest for ready cash, the constant intrigues of courtiers and ministers, the ambitions of provincial governors and tribal leaders, the riotous affrays which might suddenly engulf whole cities, and above all, the crises occasioned by the rivalries of that enormous brood of sons and daughters who bore witness to his sexual potency and appetite.<sup>5</sup>

The feuding of the Shah’s progeny supplied the ground-swell which moulded the configuration of the reign. Fath ʿAlī Shāh followed the custom of earlier Iranian dynasties in distributing provincial governorships among his

<sup>3</sup> Fraser, *Narrative of a Journey into Khorasan* 1, pp. 192–3.      <sup>4</sup> Malcolm, *op. cit.* II, p. 318.

<sup>5</sup> Fraser, writing in 1825, had heard that the Shah had “about fifty sons, and at least an hundred daughters”. *Op. cit.* 1, p. 203.

sons and grandsons, to prepare them for the exigencies of what was still perceived to be a shared family responsibility, but also to keep them from conspiring with, or against, each other. In Fath ʿAlī Shāh's calculations, this was at the same time a means of alleviating the burden on the central treasury, since the prince-governors were required to maintain themselves from the revenues of their provinces. In addition, the system implicitly enabled the Shah to maintain that equilibrium among the diverse political elements in the country which at least one scholar has diagnosed as the essence of Qājār despotism.<sup>6</sup> The advantages of "farming out" the *Shāhẓādas* (the king's sons) to the provinces were obvious, but were offset by risks of another kind. In his provincial headquarters, often far removed from the scrutiny of Tehran, the prince-governor might nourish exaggerated ambitions, inflated by his sense of self-importance as lord of his little kingdom, and flattered by his entourage and local notables; enough encouragement might tempt him to build up a local power-base, as the prince-governors of both Kirmānshāh and Fārs were to do.

Depending upon the importance of their provinces and the extent of their resources, the prince-governors (the actual title was *beglerbegī*) maintained their own courts; provincial administrations with *vaẓīrs* and revenue officials (*mustaufīs*); a military establishment of retainers resembling the royal *ghulāms* in the capital; and all the inevitable hangers-on who sought to fatten themselves upon the prince-governor's patronage, and gambled on his prospects as a future contender for the throne. In some instances, the prince-governors were minors, and in such cases, in addition to their staff of regular officials, they had attached to their household a tutor and mentor whose role, in relation to his charge, resembled that of the *atābegs* of Saljuq times.

Among the band of rival siblings in the Qājār royal house, the most formidable, until his death in 1821, was the first-born, MuḤammad ʿAlī Mīrzā. A Georgian concubine's offspring, he was ineligible for the succession, but proved himself an energetic, resourceful and ruthless leader, with several of the traits of his great-uncle, Āghā MuḤammad Khān. All acquainted with him acknowledged his audacity and courage, as well as less attractive qualities. Of him it was said that, on Āghā MuḤammad Khān enquiring of him, as a six-year old, what his first action would be, were he to become Shah, he replied: "To have you strangled!" Only the intervention of Fath ʿAlī Shāh's mother saved the child from immediate execution. MuḤammad ʿAlī Mīrzā was one of five sons to be born to Fath ʿAlī Shāh in a single lunar year (1203/1788–9). It must have been

<sup>6</sup> Abrahamian, "Oriental Despotism", pp. 27–31.

obvious that, with the passage of time, these particular siblings would become bitter rivals, and such was, indeed, to be the case. They included the future *Valī ʿabd* (heir-apparent), ʿAbbās Mīrzā, the son of a Develū Qājār mother and designated by Āghā Muḥammad Khān to be Fath ʿAlī Shāh's successor; the violent and intemperate Muḥammad Valī Mīrzā, future beglerbegī first of Khurāsān, and then Yazd; and also Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā, future beglerbegī of Fārs and an inveterate intriguer. Between Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā and ʿAbbās Mīrzā, in particular, intense hostility developed, which, some believed, was not unwelcome to the Shah.<sup>7</sup>

In 1799, the year following his father's enthronement, ʿAbbās Mīrzā, then ten years old, was granted the title of *Nāʾib al-Saltāna* to indicate that he was to be the heir to the throne, and was appointed beglerbegī of Āzarbāijān, with his capital at Tabrīz. His mentor was the venerable Sulaimān Khān Qājār, a cousin of Āghā Muḥammad Khān. His vazīr was Mīrzā ʿĪsā Farāhānī, known as Mīrzā Buzurg, the nephew of Mīrzā Ḥusain Farāhānī, a former vazīr of Karīm Khān Zand. ʿAbbās Mīrzā remained resident beglerbegī of Āzarbāijān until 1831,<sup>8</sup> and it was he, in the first instance, who had to face the Russians in the war of 1804–1813, and who unsuccessfully attempted to retrieve his honour in the second war of 1826–8. But these crisis years, though very significant, constituted two comparatively short periods in his extended rule over the most advanced, as well as the most exposed, province of the kingdom. In his time, Tabrīz flourished as a commercial and cultural centre, ironically, partly because the Russian frontier had crept so close. In times of peace, ʿAbbās Mīrzā passed his summers in Tabrīz and his winters in Khūy, interrupted by frequent visits to Tehran in order to protect his interests at court. Although he spoke no European language, he fraternized with Europeans to a far greater extent than any other member of the royal family. Before his premature death in 1833, he was regarded by those Europeans who believed that Iran needed reform and a large degree of westernization, as the one man capable of initiating a national revival.<sup>9</sup>

By way of contrast, Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā, although described as being the “most able and warlike of all the princes of Persia”,<sup>10</sup> was regarded by European observers as incurably reactionary. About 1802, his father appointed him

<sup>7</sup> Monteith, pp. 58–9.

<sup>8</sup> He did not cease to be beglerbegī of Āzarbāijān in 1831, but in that year he was appointed, in addition, beglerbegī of Khurāsān, with the objective of pacifying that province and extending its frontiers. He remained nominally beglerbegī of Āzarbāijān, but one of his younger sons acted as his deputy and was *de facto* governor.

<sup>9</sup> See H. Busse, “ʿAbbās Mīrzā”, pp. 79–84, and Avery, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> Kinneir, *Memoir*, p. 130.

beglerbegī of Kirmānshāh, Luristān and Khūzistān, an extensive bailiwick of great strategic importance, since Kirmānshāh lay athwart the ancient highway to Baghdad and the *ʿAtabāt*, the Shīʿī holy places in Mesopotamia: a major thoroughfare for commerce and pilgrimage. The need to assert control over a large and turbulent tribal population provided opportunities for military action on the part of this warlike prince. He could thus enhance his reputation as a commander in the field, while, once pacified, the tribes supplied fine recruits for his private army. In addition, he was the channel of communication between the Tehran government and the powerful Kurdish leader, the Vālī of Ardalān, Amān-Allāh Khān (c. 1800–24), a potential ally. MuḤammad ʿAlī Mīrzā’s reputation as a stern administrator, as the creator of an effective military force devoted to his service, and as the pacifier of warlike tribes was enhanced by several spectacular campaigns directed against the vilāyat of Baghdad and one brilliant raid into Russian-held territory. Not surprisingly, he began to appear a serious threat, not only to ʿAbbās Mīrzā’s succession, but to Fath ʿAlī Shāh himself.

During the early 19th century, the beglerbegī’s main concerns were keeping the peace and collecting revenue. Outside the larger towns, his effectiveness depended upon his ability to cajole or coerce prominent landowners and tribal leaders. In Kirmānshāh, MuḤammad ʿAlī Mīrzā kept the tribes on a tight rein, but in the governments of Iṣfahān and Fārs there were frequent disputes and “incidents” involving the beglerbegī’s agents and the local tribal leadership. In urban centres, the provincial administration made its will felt through the town governors and, below them, through the *dārūghas* and *kalāntars*, while it depended for support and information at the “grass roots” level upon the *kadkhudās* of the quarters (see pp. 139–40). Although for day-to-day purposes, the kalāntar and the kadkhudās were the usual channels of communication through which the urban population expressed its anxieties and grievances to their rulers, an alternative source of information and protest, and even a rival source of authority to the Shah’s representatives, lay with the Shīʿī *ʿulamā*. Only the most imprudent official would lightly provoke their wrath.

The oppositional role of the *ʿulamā* in Qājār Iran is well documented,<sup>11</sup> but while, at one level, opposition to and non-cooperation with the régime by the *ʿulamā* was consistent with the belief that, in the absence of the Hidden Imam, exercise of authority by a Shah and his agents was illegitimate, at another, the practical workings of society necessitated some degree of compromise to the

<sup>11</sup> See Algar, *Religion and State*, and Chapter 19 below.

point at which a ruler might be accepted as the Imam's *Nāʾib-Kbāṣṣ*, so long as he demonstrated at least a modicum of piety and respect for the ʿulamā. Both Āghā Muḥammad Khān and Fath ʿAlī Shāh did this. With Muḥammad Shāh, the third Qājār ruler, with his Ṣūfī leanings and his emotional dependence upon Ḥājji Mīrzā Āghāsī, the situation changed.

However much the ʿulamā were prepared to acquiesce in the *status quo* and work with the agents of government, there were times when an oppressive or exceptionally high-handed governor, or some other high official, clashed with the local religious leadership. Such clashes constituted some of the most serious internal crises with which the Qājār régime had to deal. A classic example of confrontation between the government and a local alliance of ʿulamā and urban malcontents was the virtual taking over of Iṣfahān in the late 1830's by Ḥājji Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir, supported by the city's *lūṭīs* (bands of ruffians) which only ended with the occupation of Iṣfahān by the troops of its new governor, Manūchihr Khān Muʿtamad al-Daula.<sup>12</sup> Manūchihr Khān was one of a handful of high officials who, in every decade, contributed to the régime's survival. The typical view of Qājār times, which has been reinforced by picturesque anecdotes in the writings of 19th-century European travellers, is that the central bureaucracy was both venal and vicious. It may well have been, but future historians will have to look again at all the evidence, and with more open minds. At present, it is enough to say that there must have been some exceptions: otherwise, it is difficult to understand how the government of Fath ʿAlī Shāh functioned as effectively as it did, or how Qājār rule survived for so long. Certainly, there were some individuals who continued to fit the mould of the traditional Iranian bureaucrat, and deserve a place beside the ablest servants of the Saljuqs or the Safavids.

One such was Mīrzā Buzurg, ʿAbbās Mīrzā's vazīr, who about 1809–10 also became deputy to the *Ṣadr-i aʿẓam* (prime minister), Mīrzā Shafīʿ, and received the honorific title, *Qāʾim-Maqām*. His distinguished career ended when he died of the plague in 1822. Another was his son, Mīrzā Abu'l-Qāsim, known as the second Qāʾim-Maqām, who assumed his father's offices and titles. He had a hand in negotiating the Treaty of Erzerum of 1823 with the Porte, and also the Treaty of Turkmānchai in 1828, and played a major role in ensuring the accession of Muḥammad Mīrzā, ʿAbbās Mīrzā's eldest son, as Muḥammad Shāh. It was to be his tragedy that the new ruler, whom he served briefly as prime minister,

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 108–13.

disliked his opposition to some of his measures and mistrusted his motives. MuḤammad Shāh had him strangled in 1835.

Another model administrator was Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Vahhāb Iṣfahānī, a celebrated calligrapher and poet whose ancestors had served the Safavids as *hakīms* (doctors). In 1809, he was appointed *munshī al-mamālik* (head of the royal chancellery), and granted the title, Muṭamad al-Daula. From then until his death in 1829, he seems to have increasingly drawn the most important aspects of government into his own hands. Between 1821 and 1825, he was, in effect, Iran's first minister of foreign affairs. Together with his successor in this position, Ḥājji Mīrzā Abu'l-Ḥasan Khān, he strongly opposed going to war with Russia in 1826, thereby incurring the enmity of those *mujtahids* who were urging a *jihād* against the unbelievers, but this did not diminish Fath ʿAlī Shāh's regard for him. During the last years of his life, he functioned as *de facto* prime minister, although the titular incumbent was ʿAbd-Allāh Khān Amīn al-Daula.<sup>13</sup> The impression which he left on at least some European visitors was favourable to a degree. In 1825, James Baillie Fraser found him, "... beyond all comparison the most eminent man at court for talents, probity, general popularity, and attachment to his master's interest". He describes his manners as simple and emphasizes his honesty and freedom from intrigue. Also, he was able privately to warn the king of the princes' misdemeanours. What is significant is that Fath ʿAlī Shāh was willing to listen; and shrewd enough to trust such a man as the one appointed to deal with European diplomats.<sup>14</sup>

Few members of the bureaucracy possessed any knowledge of the state of the world beyond the Iranian frontiers, but one of the exceptions was Ḥājji Mīrzā Abu'l-Ḥasan Khān, a colourful figure whose unusual career typified the uncertainties of state service under the Qājārs. His father, Mīrzā MuḤammad ʿAlī, an Iṣfahānī by birth, had served Karīm Khān Zand in the military paymaster's office. He had also made a most successful marriage, to the sister of the kalāntar of Shīrāz, Ḥājji Ibrāhīm Khān, the future vazīr of Āghā MuḤammad Khān. Through Ḥājji Ibrāhīm Khān's influence, the son of this marriage, Ḥājji Mīrzā Abu'l-Ḥasan Khān, became deputy-governor of Shūshtar. However, during the spring of 1801, when Fath ʿAlī Shāh's vengeance fell upon almost all the members of Ḥājji Ibrāhīm Khān's family, Ḥājji Mīrzā Abu'l-Ḥasan Khān escaped to Baṣra, undertook the *hajj* and then visited Hyderabad in the Deccan, where he became a confidant of the Nizām, Sikandar Jah (1802–29). On learning

<sup>13</sup> Ḥasan Fasā'ī, *Fārsnāma-yi Nāṣirī*, tr. Busse, p. 191.

<sup>14</sup> Fraser, *op. cit.* 1, pp. 147–8. See also Javadi, "ʿAbd-al-Vahhāb Moṭamed-al-Dawla".

that the Shah had pardoned the surviving members of Hājji Ibrāhīm Khān's family, he returned to Shīrāz and briefly entered the service of the beglerbegī, Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā, generally known as Farmān-farmā. He later joined the service of Hājji Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān Amīn al-Daula *Mustaufī al-mamālik*, who arranged his appointment as the Shah's first ambassador to the Court of Saint James (1809–11).<sup>15</sup> His mission to London was satirized in Morier's *Adventures of Hajji Baba in England*. He returned to Iran in 1811, in time to assist in negotiating the Treaty of Gulistān with Russia in 1813. In 1815, he was sent on an unsuccessful mission to Saint Petersburg in an effort to secure the restitution of Russian-occupied territory south of the Aras. In 1819, he was despatched on diplomatic business to Constantinople, Vienna, Paris and London. In 1825, he succeeded Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Vahhāb as foreign minister and strongly opposed the 1826–8 war with Russia, although he was to be one of the negotiators of the subsequent Treaty of Turkmānchai. He accompanied Fath ʿAlī Shāh on his final journey to Iṣfahān in 1834, and after the beglerbegī of Fārs, Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā Farmān-farmā, had appeared at court to explain his suspicious conduct, and been dismissed from the presence, Hājji Mīrzā Abu'l-Ḥasan Khān, together with ʿAbd-Allāh Khān Amīn al-Daula, was ordered to proceed to Shīrāz with a large military detachment, to collect the overdue taxes and chastise the rebellious Mamassani leader, Valī Khān. Before these instructions could be carried out, however, the Shah died. The expedition never left Iṣfahān.

The disputed succession which ensued placed Hājji Mīrzā Abu'l-Ḥasan Khān, like other high officials, in a quandary. Hating the Valī ʿahd's principal advisor and prospective prime minister, Mīrzā Abu'l-Qāsim, the second Qā'im-Maqām, he threw in his lot with ʿAlī Shāh Zill al-Sulṭān, another of the late king's sons who, like Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā, was a contender for the throne. With Muḥammad Shāh's triumphant entry into Tehran, Hājji Mīrzā Abu'l-Ḥasan Khān's position became extremely dangerous. He took *bast* (sanctuary) at Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīm, but after the execution of the second Qā'im-Maqām the new prime minister, Hājji Mīrzā Āghāsī, restored him to the foreign ministry (1838–45). Suavity, quick-wittedness, and the resilience of the natural survivor had stood him in good stead, but most Europeans who dealt with him seem to have mistrusted him. Fraser was no exception. He wrote that Ḥasan Khān was less respected and less deserving of respect than any other leading courtier. He despised him as mean and utterly false, while his notoriously dissolute habits disgusted every decent person at court.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Fraser's description of his promotion to ambassadorial rank is less than flattering. *Op. cit.* 1, pp. 149–50.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 150. See also Javadī, "Abu'l-Ḥasan Khān Īlčī".

The careers of Mīrzā Buzurg Qāʾim-Maqām, his son, Mīrzā Abuʾl-Qāsim, Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Vahhāb Muʿtamad al-Daula, and Ḥajjī Mīrzā Abuʾl-Ḥasan Khān exemplified aspects of the profession of the traditional *mīrzā*. Another successful career, illustrating a rather different but also long-established way of climbing the ladder to royal favour, was that of the influential Georgian eunuch, Manūchihr Khān Gurjī. A trusted household slave and confidant of Fath ʿAlī Shāh, he rose within the palace hierarchy to be *Īshīk Āqāsī Bāshī* (court chamberlain). In that capacity he acted with Ḥajjī Mīrzā Abuʾl-Ḥasan Khān, the foreign minister, as an advisor to ʿAbbās Mīrzā in the negotiations preceding the Treaty of Turkmānchāi. Following the death of ʿAbd al-Vahhāb Muʿtamad al-Daula in 1829, the Shah bestowed the latter's title on Manūchihr Khān and thereafter he seems to have functioned as what today would be described as an official "trouble-shooter", a rôle which he continued to play after Muḥammad Shāh's accession in 1834. Thus in 1835, following the refusal of the new Shah's uncle, Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā Farmān-farmā, to acknowledge his nephew's accession, Manūchihr Khān, acting on behalf of the governor-designate of Fārs, Fīrūz Mīrzā, the new Shah's younger brother, marched on Shīrāz, accompanied by troops under the command of Sir Henry Lindsay Bethune. Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā was arrested and the authority of the central government swiftly re-asserted. The punitive expedition against the Mamassani ordered by Fath ʿAlī Shāh on the eve of his death was now undertaken with exemplary brutality.

Two years later, Muḥammad Shāh appointed Manūchihr Khān to be beglerbegī of Kirmānshāh, Luristān and Khūzistān in place of the Shah's brother, Bahrām Mīrzā Muʿizz al-Daula. Then, in 1839–40, as a consequence of protracted unrest in Iṣfahān, where the mujtahid, Ḥajjī Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir, helped by the city's lūṭīs, had severely damaged the central government's authority, the province of ʿIrāq-i ʿAjam was added to Manūchihr Khān's already great responsibilities. He became in effect the viceroy of much of central and south-western Iran. Firmness restored order in Iṣfahān. Many lūṭīs were executed, even those promised safe-conducts. Ḥajjī Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir was inviolable, but no longer a serious menace.<sup>17</sup> After showing that he would not tolerate recalcitrance even among the ʿulamā, Manūchihr Khān crushed an incipient demonstration of insubordination by the Bakhtiyārī chieftain, Muḥammad Taqī Khān. Henry Layard detested Manūchihr Khān for his

<sup>17</sup> Algar, *op. cit.*, pp. 111–113. See also de Bode, *Travels in Luristan and Arabistan* I, pp. 49–51. For a brief description of Manūchihr Khān's career, see Flandin and Coste, Vol. II, pp. 30–8. For his dealings with the Bāb, see Algar, *op. cit.*, pp. 141–2, and Browne, *A Traveller's Narrative* II, pp. 11–13 and 263–5.



treatment of his Bakhtiyārī friends, but grudgingly acknowledged the effectiveness of his methods.<sup>18</sup>

Until his death in 1847, Manūchihr Khān continued tightly to control his enormous bailiwick. He governed in Iṣfahān in style, but was ever ready to lead his troops into the surrounding regions to discipline refractory tribes. He also seems to have been aware of the upheavals likely to follow the Shah's death. He anticipated them by creating a following amenable to his views in the Shah's household. In the 1840s he appeared one of the most powerful men in the country. It is said that on one occasion he was summoned to Tehran by Muḥammad Shāh, who remarked, "I have heard that you are like a king in Iṣfahān", to which he replied, "Yes, Your Majesty, that is true, and you must have such kings as your governors, in order to enjoy the title of King of Kings."<sup>19</sup> Like most effective Qājār officials, he combined ability and energy with avarice and cruelty, but as often happened, the more positive aspects of his work quickly vanished with his departure from the scene. What the Qājār administrative system pre-eminently lacked was continuity and consistency in its leadership, without which a bureaucracy cannot be said to be truly institutionalised.<sup>20</sup>

Under Āghā Muḥammad Khān, the civil administration of the kingdom had been quite rudimentary, but the situation changed with the accession of Fath ʿAlī Shāh. Whether by design or in response to need, the number of office-holders began to proliferate. This process continued until, during the reign of Muḥammad Shāh, Ḥājji Mīrzā Āghāsī enlarged their numbers beyond all bounds with his reckless promotion of his kinsmen and protégés. Under Fath ʿAlī Shāh, a mustaufī al-mamālik (controller-general) was appointed, with a number of mustaufīs subordinate to him. The importance of this office is indicated by the relatively lengthy tenure of successive incumbents, demonstrating the need for continuity and for mastery of the expertise traditionally associated with exchequer procedures and the techniques of *siyāq*, the notation used by the revenue officials. The growing complexity of the military establishment meant the creation of the post of *vazīr-i lashkar* (chief muster-master). In addition, there were established the offices of *munshī al-mamālik*, to oversee the royal chancery, of *muʿaiyyir al-mamālik* (mintmaster), and of *ṣāhib-i dīvān-kebāna*,

<sup>18</sup> Layard, *Khūzistān*, p. 5. For an extended account of Manūchihr Khān's dealings with the Bakhtiyārī, see Layard, *Early Adventures*. A recent summary of these relations can be found in Garthwaite, pp. 66–75. <sup>19</sup> Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, p. 219.

<sup>20</sup> For recent discussion of the Qājār bureaucracy, see Ervand Abrahamian, "Oriental Despotism"; Bakhash, "The Evolution of Qajar Bureaucracy"; and Meredith, "Early Qajar Administration".

whose duties seem to have included authorization of the disbursement of funds. These offices, or more accurately, their functions were not new: most were rooted in Safavid administrative practice. But with the decay of bureaucratic institutions during the troubles of the 18th century and with Āghā Muḥammad Khān's preference for only the minimum clerical activity, such ministerial positions had to be resuscitated.<sup>21</sup>

This was most obviously the case with the office of the principal vazīr, or prime minister. A total of seven served the first two Shahs of the 19th century: Ḥājji Ibrāhīm Khān (1795–1801); Mīrzā Shafīʿ (1801–19); Ḥājji Muḥammad Ḥusain Khān Amīn al-Daula (1819–23); ʿAbd-Allāh Khān Amīn al-Daula (1823–5); Allāh-Yār Khān Qājār Develū Āṣaf al-Daula (1825–8); ʿAbd-Allāh Khān Amīn al-Daula (1828–34, second term of office); Mīrzā Abu'l-Qāsim Qā'im-Maqām (1834–5); and Ḥājji Mīrzā Āghāsī (1835–48). The first Qājār prime minister, Ḥājji Ibrāhīm Khān, was given the title of *I'timād al-Daula*, a relic of Safavid times. In 1801, he was put to death in the cruellest possible manner by Fath ʿAlī Shāh, warned by his predecessor not to trust the man who had betrayed the Zands. The title of *I'timād al-Daula* remained unused again until Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's time and his second prime minister, Mīrzā Āghā Khān Nūrī, in 1851. Fath ʿAlī Shāh revived the title *Ṣadr-i Aʿẓam*. After the dismissal of the second Amīn al-Daula – the first had been his father, who was also *Ṣadr-i Aʿẓam* – in 1825, he was, uncharacteristically, replaced by a Qājār nobleman, Allāh-Yār Khān Qājār Develū Āṣaf al-Daula. Neither he nor his predecessor were designated *Ṣadr-i Aʿẓam*, but had chief minister's functions. In 1826 the Shah sent Allāh-Yār Khān to join the Valī ʿahd, ʿAbbās Mīrzā, on the Russian front where he campaigned with the Crown Prince, was captured when the Russians took Tabrīz in October 1827, but released in time for the negotiations at Turkmānchāi. Fath ʿAlī Shāh appears to have blamed him for inciting the Valī ʿahd to undertake what had proved to be a disastrous war,<sup>22</sup> and at Naurūz, 1828, restored ʿAbd-Allāh Khān Amīn al-Daula as first minister, hence his being with the Shah on the latter's death in 1834. But he failed to support Muḥammad Shāh's accession and was later exiled to the ʿAtabāt, the Holy Places in Mesopotamia, where he died in 1847, having had all his property in Iran confiscated.<sup>23</sup>

As has been said, Muḥammad Shāh's first prime minister was Mīrzā Abu'l-

<sup>21</sup> An interesting example of this process was the way in which the Safavid office of *Vakīl-i Vazīr-i Aʿẓam* (deputy of the principal vazīr) re-emerged in the title of *Qā'im-Maqām*, which while granted to the *vazīr* of the *Valī ʿahd*, normally resident in Tabrīz, conveyed the idea of a *locum tenens* to the *Ṣadr-i Aʿẓam*. <sup>22</sup> See Avery, *op. cit.*, pp. 36–9. <sup>23</sup> See Amanat, "Amīn-al-Dawla".

Qāsim Qāʾim-Maqām, whom he soon had strangled. The appointment followed immediately of Ḥājī Mīrzā Āghāsī, who was born in Erivan in 1783–4 and had studied Sufism and theology in the ʿAtabāt and become a favourite at the court of ʿAbbās Mīrzā, to whose son he became both tutor and *murshid* (spiritual guide). Thus he exercised an extraordinary influence over his former pupil; he was to be the virtual ruler of the kingdom from 1835 until MuḤammad Shāh's death in 1848.

This brief review of those who held the office of prime minister between 1797 and 1848 suggests a greater deal of administrative continuity, at the highest level, than might otherwise have been supposed. Fath ʿAlī Shāh had five prime ministers in thirty-seven years (with one serving two terms of office) and MuḤammad Shāh, two in fourteen years. Several of these men were, by common report, persons of real capacity. Malcolm, writing in 1815, found it hard to describe these Iranian prime ministers' functions precisely. He said that their duties depended on how much of their sovereign's favour and confidence they enjoyed, and on the king's indolence or competence. He added that they were at the mercy of royal caprice and preoccupied with waiting on the king, and "the intricacies of private intrigues"; their lives and property were "always in peril".<sup>24</sup>

No permanent ministries or designated offices for the high officials of state existed. Insecurity of tenure and the prime minister's lack of a regular place in which to transact business, and his need to keep near the royal presence, reinforced foreign observers' impression of the capricious and idiosyncratic character of Iranian government under the Qājārs.

The insouciance which European observers attributed to the conduct of the civil administration extended to that of the military. The general perception was that, with the death of Āghā MuḤammad Khān, there had been a rapid deterioration in the fighting capacity of the armed forces, and that thereafter and for the remainder of the period of Qājār rule, their performance left much to be desired. Against this pessimistic assessment, several British officers seconded to ʿAbbās Mīrzā's service pointed out that, on occasion, units of the cavalry performed well when led by a trusted commander. Against superior European discipline and technology, however, Iranian units generally performed poorly,

<sup>24</sup> Malcolm, *History* II, pp. 435–6. It is interesting to compare with this passage, Minorsky's on the functions of the Safavid *Vazīr-i Aʿẓam*: "... the duties of the Grand Vizier may be summarized as follows: he confirmed all the official appointments, from the highest ranks to the lowest; he administered the state finance and controlled all the operations with the revenue; he checked the legality of procedure of all the officials of state . . . foreign policy, including negotiations with ambassadors, the signing of treaties, etc.". Minorsky, *Tadhkīrat al-Mulūk*, p. 115.

though often with great courage, as in both the wars with Russia. It was largely a matter of mismanagement and indiscipline, and in this regard, the European-officered battalions of ʿAbbās Mīrzā's *Nizām-i Jadīd* (new army) did not perform much better than the traditional militias and tribal units. The British envoy, Sir Harford Jones, observed that units trained by British officers on European lines were less impressive than the mounted irregular levies trained and equipped by MuḤammad ʿAlī Mīrzā.<sup>25</sup>

The size and effectiveness of the army under Fath ʿAlī Shāh and MuḤammad Shāh fluctuated in response to need and fiscal exigency. It was organized into two distinct sections: traditional forces dating from the time of Āghā MuḤammad Khān, and units on the European model favoured by ʿAbbās Mīrzā. The traditional part comprised three categories of troops: royal ghulāms, irregular tribal levies, and the militia. The ghulāms were the Shah's personal bodyguard of well-armed and well-mounted horsemen, many of them Georgian slaves, commanded by young Qājār nobles. In the 1820s they numbered between three and four thousand men. Similar establishments on a smaller scale were maintained by provincial governors; those ruling over particularly turbulent or exposed provinces, such as Khurāsān or Kirmānshāh, maintained what were in effect personal armies.

Secondly, there were the irregular cavalry levies provided by the tribes, usually under the command of their respective chieftains. Theoretically, these levies were at the Shah's disposal in time of need. In practice, only certain tribes were consistently dependable. Thirdly, was the militia raised by the provincial and city governors among a population which was still armed to the teeth, although lacking formal training or discipline. Among the provincial militias, those of Māzandarān and Astarābād were regarded as particularly formidable.

Taken as a whole, these units were adequate for maintaining a sporadic kind of order throughout the kingdom, especially if they were led by a leader like Āghā MuḤammad Khān; to withstand the Russians, something more was needed. Hence ʿAbbās Mīrzā's regular troops, trained and equipped after the European manner. These regulars were first instructed by French officers, and then by British, as well as some Russian renegades and other European soldiers of fortune. After the Treaty of Gulistān, this new army, the *Nizām-i Jadīd*, comprised horse-artillery with twenty field-pieces, 12,000 regular cavalry, and 12,000 regular infantry. The last consisted of twelve battalions with a nominal strength of a thousand men in each. They were grouped into nine regiments

<sup>25</sup> Brydges, pp. 255–6.

according to tribe or region. According to Malcolm, writing in 1815, they consisted of 2,000 Afshārs, 2,000 Shaqāqīs, 1,000 Dunbulīs, 1,000 Muqaddams, 1,000 Kangarlūs, 1,000 men from Qarājadāgh, 1,000 from Tabrīz, 2,000 from Marand and 1,000 from the Khanate of Erivan.<sup>26</sup> Fraser, a few years later, listed 2,000 Shaqāqīs, 2,000 from Qarājadāgh, 2,000 from Tabrīz, 1,000 from Marand, 1,000 from Khūy, 1,000 from Marāgha, 1,000 from Urmīya, 1,000 from the Khanate of Nakhchivān, and 1,000 grenadiers, described as the Russian battalion, perhaps because it was largely officered by Russian deserters.<sup>27</sup> Whatever the precise composition of the individual regiments, however, it is clear that the Nizām-i Jadīd was recruited almost exclusively from Āzarbāijān and the neighbouring Khanates. This was ʿAbbās Mīrzā's own army, but in addition to it, the Shah supposedly maintained a parallel military establishment, composed of regular infantry, cavalry and horse-artillery. By all accounts this was something of a token force, less well-trained, less disciplined and invariably below strength. The only units of it which earned praise from British officers were two battalions of Bakhtiyārī tribesmen.<sup>28</sup>

The presence of European officers as instructors with the Iranian army was a direct consequence of the way in which European Great Power rivalries during the era of the Napoleonic Wars had penetrated Iran. It is with the diplomatic wrangling of British, French and Russian envoys at the court of the Shah, and Iran's two disastrous armed conflicts with Russia, that the reign of Fath ʿAlī Shāh is most frequently associated; or, to put it another way, in so far as the reign is regarded as being of significance, it is because it marks the first phase of Iran's painful encounter with the West. This perception of the reign, however, is largely conditioned by the wisdom of hindsight and a Eurocentric vision of world history. It is by no means certain that Fath ʿAlī Shāh and his Iranian contemporaries would have interpreted the age in which they lived in such a way. For in many respects, conditions in Iran during the reigns of Fath ʿAlī Shāh and MuḤammad Shāh differed hardly at all from those of the preceding century. Early 19th-century Iran was still a traditional, deeply conservative society, little affected inwardly by its often disagreeable encounters with the European powers, and devoted to its Shīʿī faith and the preservation of Islamic values. The Qājār Shahs, all-powerful autocrats though they seemed, lacking any spiritual charisma were forced to conciliate the ʿulamā and demonstrate piety through charitable endowments and the building or repair of mosques and *madrasas* (see pp. 910–12). Malcolm, who paid close attention to the religious institutions of

<sup>26</sup> Malcolm, *History* II, p. 499.

<sup>27</sup> Fraser, *op. cit.* I, p. 226.

<sup>28</sup> Malcolm, *History* II, p. 500.

Fath ʿAlī Shāh's Iran, recognized the singular importance of the mujtahids in that society when he wrote: "The ecclesiastical class, which includes the priests who officiate in the offices of religion, and those who expound the law as laid down in the Koran and the books of traditions, are deemed, by the defenceless part of the population, as the principal shield between them and the absolute authority of their monarch. The superiors of this class enjoy a consideration that removes them from those personal apprehensions to which almost all others are subject. The people have a right to appeal to them in all ordinary cases, where there appears an outrage against law and justice, unless when the disturbed state of the country calls for the exercise of military power."<sup>29</sup>

European travellers in Iran in the 19th century frequently failed to see the wood for the trees, but in Malcolm's case, he was able to describe the unique position of the senior ʿulamā in relation to society as a whole. "It is not easy", he wrote, "to describe persons who fill no office, receive no appointment, who have no specific duties, but who are called, from their superior learning, piety and virtue, by the silent but unanimous suffrage of the inhabitants of the country in which they live, to be their guides in religion, and their protectors against the violence and oppression of their rulers, and who receive from those by whose feelings they are elevated a respect and duty which lead the proudest kings to join the popular voice, and to pretend, if they do not feel, a veneration for the man who has attained this sacred rank. There are seldom more than three or four priests of the dignity of Mooshtahed (*sic*) in Persia. Their conduct is expected to be exemplary, and to show no worldly bias; neither must they connect themselves with the king or the officers of the government. They seldom depart from that character to which they owe their rank . . . When a mooshtahed dies, his successor is always a person of the most eminent rank in the ecclesiastical order; and, though he may be pointed out to the populace by others of the same class seeking him as an associate, it is rare to hear of any intrigues being employed to obtain this enviable dignity."<sup>30</sup>

Fath ʿAlī Shāh endeavoured to present himself as a pious, God-fearing ruler who listened to the words of the ʿulamā and set an example as the fount of justice and charity. His sons followed his example. In the case of MuḤammad ʿAlī Mīrzā, for example, the prince's intended assault on Baghdad was turned aside in 1804 and again in 1812 by the pleas of Shaikh Jaʿfar Najafī; in 1818, he accepted the mediation of Āghā Aḥmad Kirmānshāhī of Karbalā in a dispute with Sulaimān Pāshā, the ruler of the Baghdad *vilāyat*. In 1821, he withdrew from

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, II, pp. 429–30.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, II, pp. 443–4.

# FATH ʿALĪ SHĀH AND MUḤAMMAD SHĀH



Map 5. Iran's territorial losses during the reign of Fath ʿAlī Shāh

Baghdad at the behest of Shaikh Mūsā Najafī, a son of Shaikh Jaʿfar. The good will of these three mujtahids of the ʿAtabāt was more important than victory in the field, although it is possible that in each case retreat was also a face-saving device. Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā also followed his father's example in extending his hospitality to Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsāʾī, the celebrated Baḥrainī mendicant later denounced for his infidelity (*kufṛ*), during two protracted stays in Kirmānshāh. The Shaikh was granted an annual pension of 700 *tūmāns* and later "sold" the prince one of the gates of Paradise, the bill of sale for which was to be wrapped in the latter's shroud.<sup>31</sup> Not surprisingly, ministers and courtiers emulated the conduct of the royal family towards the ʿulamā. In some respects, and within the constraints implicit in the doctrine of the Hidden Imam's exercise of sovereignty, Fath ʿAlī Shāh could pose as an acceptable Nāʾib-Khāṣṣ (Special Deputy) of the *Ṣāhib al-Zamān* (Lord of the Age: the Hidden Imam).

<sup>31</sup> For these examples of Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā's piety, see Algar, *op. cit.*, pp. 54 and 68–70.

Fath ʿAlī Shāh's reign falls into five phases. First, the years of consolidation between 1797 and 1804, when, had he demonstrated sufficient energy, he might have integrated northern and eastern Khurāsān with the rest of the kingdom, pacified the Türkmens beyond the Atrak, and perhaps annexed Marv or Herat. Instead, he only undertook desultory military progresses which achieved little and were called off with the approach of autumn, when the Shah hurried back to his capital. Secondly, the phase of the first war with Russia, from 1804 to 1813, and of the diplomatic wooing of Iran, first by France and then by Great Britain, which both flattered the court and aroused its greed, only in the end to provoke disillusion. The war did not go on continuously, and not all the news was bad, but the cost was ruinous and, by the time that it was all over, the new dynasty had been profoundly humiliated.

During the third phase, the thirteen years between 1813 and 1826, the court nursed its wounds, consumed the British subsidy and sought to compensate its loss of prestige by attacking less dangerous neighbours. One of Fath ʿAlī Shāh's younger sons, Ḥasan ʿAlī Mīrzā Shujāʿ al-Saltāna, who had recently replaced his brother, Muḥammad Valī Mīrzā, as beglerbegī of Khurāsān, defeated a force of Afghans at Kafīr Qilaʿ in 1818, while in the same year Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā, beglerbegī of Kirmānshāh, raided Ottoman Kurdistan. In 1820 war was formally declared between the Ottoman Sultan and the Shah, and both Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā, operating from Kirmānshāh, and ʿAbbās Mīrzā, from his base at Tabrīz, launched attacks on Ottoman territory. Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā made a successful advance towards Baghdad, but was forced to fall back by a cholera epidemic to which he himself fell victim in November 1821. ʿAbbās Mīrzā distinguished himself by taking Bayazit and Toprak Qalʿa, and moving on towards Erzerum, while a second column captured Bitlis and advanced towards Diyarbakr. The Ottoman counter-attack was repelled by ʿAbbās Mīrzā at Khūy (May 1822), but the cholera was by now also raging through his army, and he therefore opted for peace, which was signed at Erzerum in the following July. The war against the Ottomans had provided a much-needed boost to the hitherto sagging reputation of the Valī ʿahd, but had not removed the main preoccupation of the court: the continuous rivalries among the Shāhzādas and the way in which these rivalries might affect the succession.

In theory, of course, this matter had already been settled, at the time of the marriage of Fath ʿAlī Shāh (then himself heir-apparent) to ʿAbbās Mīrzā's mother. This marriage, with the subsequent birth of ʿAbbās Mīrzā, had been part of Āghā Muḥammad Khān's grand design for the perpetuation of the dynasty. In reality, however, there was no such thing as a fixed law of succession:



at Fath ʿAlī Shāh's death, it would be a case of the survival of the fittest. During the first half of the reign, the most obvious threat to ʿAbbās Mīrzā's succession had come from Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā in Kirmānshāh. Fortunately for ʿAbbās Mīrzā, however, and perhaps for Fath ʿAlī Shāh too, the cholera epidemic of 1821 removed Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā from the scene.<sup>32</sup>

Other contenders remained. Two of the most dangerous were Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā Farmān-farmā, beglerbegī of Fārs (1799–1835), and his full-brother, Ḥasan ʿAlī Mīrzā Shujāʿ al-Saltāna, beglerbegī of Khurāsān (c. 1816/17–1823), and of Kirmān (1827/8–1835). The former was the same age as ʿAbbās Mīrzā; he ruled a comparatively remote and rich satrapy; and among his subjects were warlike and turbulent tribes who, half a century earlier, had been among the bulwarks of Zand ascendancy. Fārs, moreover, had a tradition of going its own way, and since Ḥājji Ibrāhīm Khān and his family had aroused the resentment of Fath ʿAlī Shāh in 1801, the Shīrāzis had been viewed with suspicion at court. Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā and his entourage were regarded as congenital intriguers, and were as closely scrutinized as possible. During the last five years of his reign, the Shah felt compelled on three separate occasions to attend personally to the affairs of Fārs: in 1829, when he himself went to Shīrāz; in 1831, when he went as far as Iṣfahān and summoned Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā to his presence; and in 1834, when he again went to Iṣfahān (on the eve of his death) and after receiving Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā in audience, despatched the prime minister and other high officials to Shīrāz to enquire into the state of the province.

Ḥasan ʿAlī Mīrzā Shujāʿ al-Saltāna was a younger man than Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā, but the size and importance of his charge, Khurāsān, made him a person of great consequence, not least because both the turbulence of the province and its exposure to Afghan and Türkmen raiders required the beglerbegī to maintain a considerable military establishment. This, in turn, provided opportunities for the beglerbegī to acquire a martial reputation. Ḥasan ʿAlī Mīrzā had fought the Afghans in 1818 at Kafīr Qilaʿ and claimed a great victory (or so it was reported in Tehran, although there is some uncertainty as to the actual outcome of the engagement). During the course of the 1820–2 war with the Ottomans, rumours reached the court of disaffection on the part of both Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā and

<sup>32</sup> Fath ʿAlī Shāh may have regarded Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā as a potential rival and would not have been happy with the opinion that the prince “is thought by many to be the most powerful of all the governors in the empire, not excepting the Shah himself”; Buckingham, *Travels* I, p. 178. When news of the prince's death reached Tehran, Fraser noted with surprise the apparent lack of grief on the part of the Shah; *op. cit.* I, pp. 148–9. It was obvious to all that the death of Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā, while dashing the hopes of his faction at court, had greatly reduced the threat of a disputed succession; *ibid.* I, pp. 145–6. For Fath ʿAlī Shāh's supposed suspicions of ʿAbbās Mīrzā, see Fowler, *Three Years in Persia* II, pp. 11 and 38–9.

Ḥasan ʿAlī Mīrzā. Whatever the truth behind these rumours, the signing of the peace treaty at Erzerum and the enhanced reputation of ʿAbbās Mīrzā as a result of his performance in the field probably alerted the two brothers to their danger. Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā urged that both of them should hasten to court and refute the charges which were being levelled against them. Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā appeared in Tehran in December 1822 and Ḥasan ʿAlī Mīrzā in March 1823. The former was exculpated and returned to Shīrāz, but the latter was stripped of his governorship and sent into internal exile. He accompanied Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā as far as Iṣfahān and there he remained in relative obscurity for several years until he was restored to favour and appointed governor of Kirmān.

This was by no means an isolated case of Fath ʿAlī Shāh's willingness to chastise wayward sons. Ḥasan ʿAlī Mīrzā's predecessor as beglerbegī of Khurāsān, Muḥammad Valī Mīrzā, had been treated with even greater severity. Muḥammad Valī Mīrzā was another of Fath ʿAlī Shāh's sons to be born in the same year as Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā, ʿAbbās Mīrzā, and Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā. In the autumn of 1802, the Shah, in the course of besieging Mashhad, which had been seized by Nādir Mīrzā, the son of the last Afsharid, Shāhrukh, appointed Muḥammad Valī Mīrzā beglerbegī of Khurāsān and, himself returning to Tehran, left his son to continue the investment of the city, which early in 1803 opened its gates to the besiegers. Some years later, Muḥammad Valī Mīrzā imprudently lavished favours upon the ambitious chieftain, Iṣḥāq Khān of Turbat-i Ḥaidarī, even appointing him *sardār* (commander) of his troops. Emboldened by these favours, Iṣḥāq Khān openly dared to challenge the authority of the beglerbegī, plotted to make himself independent with the assistance of other rebellious chiefs and with help from the Afghans (which was denied him), and eventually made his master his prisoner. Muḥammad Valī Mīrzā managed to escape and make his way to Tehran, where he secured the Shah's approval for the assassination of Iṣḥāq Khān and his sons, which in due course was carried out. However, thereafter the affairs of Khurāsān degenerated into such chaos that Fath ʿAlī Shāh was forced to intervene and replace Muḥammad Valī Mīrzā with his brother, Ḥasan ʿAlī Mīrzā. Muḥammad Valī Mīrzā was recalled to Tehran in disgrace. Inflamed by treatment which he regarded as unjust, he burst into his father's presence with his sword drawn and abused him. For this, he was beaten and driven out of the palace. The prince was unemployed and penurious for two or three years until sent to govern Yazd.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Fraser, II, p. 28. As governor of Yazd, Muḥammad Valī Mīrzā proved to be the worst kind of Qājār proconsul, but even before his arrival in Yazd, that province had not been well served by its rulers; as a case-study it may be fairly typical. See *ibid.* II, pp. 23–4.

The fourth phase of Fath ʿAlī Shāh's reign comprised the brief, but disastrous 1826–8 war with Russia, followed by the Treaty of Turkmānchāi. It may be conjectured that the immediate causes of this conflict were ʿAbbās Mīrzā's need to restore a reputation tarnished by earlier defeat at the hands of the infidels, the pressure to renew the struggle put upon him by the prime minister, Allāh-Yār Khān Qājār, and the campaign for a jihād mounted by mujtahids such as Āghā Sayyid Muḥammad Iṣfahānī.<sup>34</sup> Certainly, had the Iranians gained a victory, ʿAbbās Mīrzā would have been its greatest beneficiary, but the second war with Russia was even more disastrous than the first, although briefer and therefore less costly. It is true that by the terms of the Treaty of Turkmānchāi, ʿAbbās Mīrzā could anticipate Russian assistance in his succession to the throne, but that hardly offset the immediate humiliation of military defeat. It is not surprising that, on his return from Turkmānchāi, the prime minister who had encouraged the Valī ʿahd to go to war was replaced by the more prudent and dependable ʿAbd-Allāh Khān Amīn al-Daula. The question now was what could be done to improve ʿAbbās Mīrzā's prospects for a peaceful succession. This preoccupation continued throughout the last phase of the reign, from 1828 to 1834, and goes far to explain the old Shah's insistence on bringing the insubordinate administration in Fārs to order.

After Turkmānchāi ʿAbbās Mīrzā's position was more precarious *vis-à-vis* his fraternal rivals. Moreover, Fath ʿAlī Shāh's many grandchildren were now of age, which meant that there would be additional contenders for the throne. Fath ʿAlī Shāh had rarely been able to keep his sons in line. In this last phase of the reign, his reputation tarnished, as was the Valī ʿahd's, as a result of the recent defeats, he was even more hard-pressed to maintain a semblance of dynastic unity. Almost everywhere in the south, the south-west, and the south-east, unrest threatened.

In 1831, the Shah had to set out from Tehran, as he had been forced to do in 1829 when he marched on Shīrāz. This time it was to reconcile one of his sons, Muḥammad Taqī Mīrzā Ḥusām al-Saltāna, the governor of Burūjird, and his grandson, Muḥammad Ḥusain Mīrzā Ḥishmat al-Daula, governor of Kirmānshāh. This accomplished, he travelled to Iṣfahān, again primarily to investigate the affairs of Fārs. Earlier that same year, ʿAbbās Mīrzā had joined the court from Tabrīz and had been sent to quell the disturbances in Yazd and Kirmān. He now came from Kirmān to the Shah's camp near Iṣfahān and was appointed beglerbegī of Khurāsān, although he continued to retain the office of

<sup>34</sup> See Avery, *op. cit.*, and Algar, *op. cit.*, pp. 82–9.

beglerbegī of Āzarbāijān, which was placed in the charge of one of his younger sons, Farīdūn Mīrzā.

The appointment of the Valī ʿahd to be beglerbegī of Khurāsān was a decision of great significance. Khurāsān offered refractory chieftains to be brought into line, Türkmen raiders to be punished, and laurels to be won in conquering Marv or Herat. Moreover, there had long lingered around the person of the Valī ʿahd the suspicion that he was not a good Muslim. It was not solely that he had twice been forced to make peace with the infidel Russians. In Āzarbāijān, he had acquired a dangerous reputation for innovation, for acquiring Western novelties, and for hobnobbing with Frankish doctors, diplomats and soldiers. In Mashhad, a shrine city, he could appear pious. He embarked on his new charge with the vigour unexpected in one who had long been in poor health.<sup>35</sup> During the summer and autumn of 1832 he campaigned vigorously against rebellious chieftains in an arc stretching from Qūchān to Turbat-i Ḥaidarī, and staged a massacre of Türkmens at Sarakhs. He visited Tehran in the summer of the following year, but was soon back in Mashhad, having sent ahead orders to his eldest son, MuḤammad Mīrzā, to prepare for an expedition against Herat, or perhaps Marv. As it was, he died in Mashhad in October 1833 and was buried in the shrine of Imām Rizā. He was only forty-four.

Whatever expectations ʿAbbās Mīrzā's death may have raised amongst his erstwhile rivals, Fath ʿAlī Shāh proceeded with the succession policy prescribed by his predecessor. He nominated ʿAbbās Mīrzā's eldest son, MuḤammad Mīrzā, heir-apparent, granted him the title of Nāʾib al-Saltāna, appointed him beglerbegī of Āzarbāijān and Khurāsān, and at Naurūz 1834, summoned him to Tehran from Mashhad, where he had been with his late father, and formally installed him as the new Valī ʿahd. MuḤammad Mīrzā then departed for Tabrīz, and the Shah set out for Iṣfahān in early autumn, on the last journey of his reign. He died in Iṣfahān in October 1834.

Among the members of the Shah's entourage there was anxiety that the news of his death might be the signal for civil war, especially as he had died outside the capital. As a temporary expedient, therefore, his body was placed in a litter as if he were still alive, and, accompanied by the royal harem and the household servants, was hurriedly taken to Qum, to be buried close to the shrine of Fāṭima, sister of the Eighth Imam. Only then was the news of his death published. Already, messengers had been despatched to Tabrīz to warn MuḤammad Mīrzā, the Valī ʿahd. Despite these precautions, the reign of MuḤammad Shāh opened

<sup>35</sup> Volodarsky, "Persia's Foreign Policy", p. 114.

with rival contenders staking their claims to the throne. The new ruler, supported by both the British and Russian envoys, hastened to Tehran and celebrated his formal accession in January 1835. Meanwhile, as had long been expected, Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā Farmān-farmā in Shīrāz arranged to have himself proclaimed Shah. Shortly afterwards, he was joined by his younger brother, Ḥasan ʿAlī Mīrzā Shujāʿ al-Saltāna. However, as has already been related, Manūchihr Khān Muʿtamad al-Daula was sent by MuḤammad Shāh to crush this revolt, and he did so with such effectiveness and brutality that Fārs, at least, was quickly secured. Both rebel princes were despatched to Tehran. Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā died there three months later, supposedly of the plague. Ḥasan ʿAlī Mīrza was blinded on arrival, but lived on as a captive until 1852–3.

Another son of Fath ʿAlī Shāh, ʿAlī Shāh Zill al-Sultān, the governor of Tehran, also briefly aspired to the throne, but faced with the *fait accompli* of MuḤammad Shāh's triumphal progress from Tabrīz, he swiftly capitulated and was granted the honour of attending his nephew's coronation. Away from the capital, and especially in the south and south-west, news of the old Shah's death provided a pretext for disorderly conduct, if not outright insurrection. In Kirmānshāh province, MuḤammad ʿAlī Mīrzā's son, MuḤammad Ḥusain Mīrzā, had ruled as beglerbegī since 1821 (apart from an interval between 1826 and 1829). The news that his grandfather was dead placed him in a quandary. He himself seems to have lacked either the capacity or the ambition to make a bid for the throne but, in any case, he no longer possessed the military establishment which had been his father's pride. He had also long since dissipated the good will of those tribes with which his father had been on such excellent terms. Relatively isolated in Kirmānshāh, it was impossible for him to estimate the comparative strengths of the three contending parties. Hence, he sent off assurances of loyalty to his cousin, MuḤammad Shāh, supposedly still in Tabrīz, to ʿAlī Shāh Zill al-Sultān in Tehran, and to Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā Farmān-farmā in Shīrāz.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, although the city of Kirmānshāh remained quiet, all the country in the direction of Hamadān, and south as far as Shūshtar, was ablaze, as the Failī, Lur and Bakhtiyārī tribes sought to make the most of what promised to be a long and troubled interregnum. Predictably, MuḤammad Ḥusain Mīrzā's attempts to maintain good standing with all three parties failed miserably, and no sooner was MuḤammad Shāh securely in control than he despatched his brother, Bahrām Mīrzā Muʿizz al-Daula, to replace him. The new beglerbegī reached Kirmānshāh in January 1835. MuḤammad Ḥusain Mīrzā, who had taken

<sup>36</sup> Fraser, *Koordistan* 1, p. 350. For relations with the Gūrān, see Fraser, *ibid.* 11, p. 187; Keppel, 11, pp. 57–8; and D.N. MacKenzie, "Gūrān", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., 11, pp. 1139–40.

sanctuary in the house of the city *pīsh-namāz* (leader of the congregational prayers), was seized and sent to Tehran. He ended his days as a prisoner in the citadel of Ardabīl, along with other members of the royal family considered potential threats to the new régime.<sup>37</sup>

Muḥammad Shāh ruled for fourteen years, and in most respects his administration did not constitute a significant break with the style of government of the previous reign, except in the important area of relations with the ʿulamā. As a ruler, Muḥammad Shāh has not received much praise, least of all among British writers who, outraged at his attempts to re-integrate Herat into his kingdom by force, denounced him as a Russian pawn. The Russians certainly encouraged him; they preferred Iranian attention to be turned eastwards. But the fact is that in his attitude to the Herat question, Muḥammad Shāh was only pursuing what had been the aim of all his predecessors. It was in direct continuation of the avowed intentions of his father, ʿAbbās Mīrzā, that he first campaigned against the Türkmens in the summer of 1836 and then advanced against Herat late in the following year.<sup>38</sup> There followed a desultory siege of several months, during which he never really came close to dislodging Yār Muḥammad, the energetic vazīr of Kamrān Shāh Durrānī. He was, however, exposed to intensely hostile pressure from the British, and in the autumn of 1838 he abandoned the siege. Not that Herat was thereafter forgotten: the British imbroglio in Kabul during the First Afghan War, their subsequent disinclination to get involved in Afghan affairs, and the long years of Yār Muḥammad's rule as sole master of Herat (1842–51) provided opportunities for the pursuit of intermittent but not unfriendly contacts between the Tehran and Herat durbars.

In Iran itself, affairs did not go well: the southern provinces of the kingdom were frequently in a state of semi-revolt, encouraged by the intrigues of those members of the Qājār royal family who now lived in exile in Baghdad. They had a hand in the 1838 rebellion of Āghā Khān Maḥallātī in Yazd and Kirmān, which eventually resulted in the relocation of the Ismāʿīlī leadership in Bombay. The Baghdad exiles enjoyed a heightened importance because, for much of the reign, relations between Iran and the Ottoman Empire were strained to breaking-point on account of border disputes, notably over Muḥammara on the Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab estuary, and the treatment of Shīʿī pilgrims passing through Ottoman territory. War nearly broke out on at least two occasions: when the Pasha of Baghdad attacked Muḥammara in 1838, during the months when the Iranians were preoccupied with the siege of Herat, and again in 1843, when Muḥammad Najīb

<sup>37</sup> Fraser, *Koordistan* I, pp. 322 and 351, and II, pp. 162, 291.

<sup>38</sup> Volodarsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 111–14.

Pāshā's entry into Karbalā, for the purpose of crushing the local lūṭīs, who had turned the city into a sanctuary for criminals, resulted in a general massacre of the inhabitants.<sup>39</sup> Both the British and Russian missions intervened to prevent war between the two states, and their good offices led to the opening of a conference at Erzerum in 1843, at which all four governments were represented. Its deliberations continued intermittently for nearly four years, but by June 1847 a treaty was concluded which, although far from satisfactory to either party, brought a measure of peace to traditionally unstable frontier areas.

To what extent Muḥammad Shāh was in firm control of events throughout his reign, and how far he followed his seemingly insouciant prime minister, Ḥājji Mīrzā Āghāsī, awaits further research. The record does not convey the impression of a particularly strong or energetic personality. The murder, early in the reign, of his first prime minister, Mīrzā Abu'l-Qāsim Qā'im-Maqām, provoked unfavourable comment among foreign observers, as did the Shah's subsequent dependence upon his second prime minister, Ḥājji Mīrzā Āghāsī, who rightly or wrongly has remained one of the most consistently denigrated figures of the Qājār period. So far as internal developments were concerned, probably the most dangerous aspect of the Shah's reliance on Ḥājji Mīrzā Āghāsī was the latter's pronounced Ṣūfī leanings. Muḥammad Shāh had been drawn to Sufism at an early age, but under the steadily increasing influence of a murshid who was also mentor and minister, the Shah became the willing sustainer of Ṣūfīs of all sorts, and in consequence neglected to maintain the traditional rôle of the ruler as patron and benefactor of the Shī'ī ʿulamā. To have a Ṣūfī Shah was bad enough; to have his spiritual master raised to be the Ṣadr-i Aʿẓam was worse; but even more serious was the fact that the Shah's devotion to Ḥājji Mīrzā Āghāsī ensured that he would not seek the spiritual guidance of a *Marjaʿ-i Taqlīd* (Source of Precedent), for he regarded the Ḥājji as a sufficient guide. Thus, throughout his reign, Muḥammad Shāh's relations with the leading representatives of the ʿulamā were strained as they never were in the time of Fath ʿAlī Shāh. It is from this reign that there first appeared among the ʿulamā that bitter hatred of the Qājārs and the conviction of the illegitimacy of their rule which would so adversely prejudice popular opinion against them during the Tobacco Concession crisis of 1891–2, throughout the entire Constitutional period, and down to the final demise of the dynasty.<sup>40</sup>

Muḥammad Shāh's less than cordial relations with the leading ʿulamā of his time were due entirely to his Ṣūfī proclivities and his dependence upon Ḥājji

<sup>39</sup> Algar, *op. cit.*, pp. 114–17. See also Cole and Momen, "Mafia, Mob and Shiism in Iraq".

<sup>40</sup> See Algar, *op. cit.*, pp. 120–121.

Mīrzā Āghāsī, not to any encouragement of infidel innovations such as had characterized his father, ʿAbbās Mīrzā. Indeed, some caution needs to be exercised in attributing to either Fath ʿAlī Shāh or MuḤammad Shāh personally any conscious thrust in the direction of “westernization”, although there were at court individuals who were enthusiastic about foreign novelties. The most that can be said with regard to these two reigns is that, as contacts with the agents of foreign powers were becoming fairly frequent during the first fifty years of the 19th century, it was inevitable that some degree of European influence would permeate a small circle of Iranians, mainly members of the royal family, courtiers and senior officials. Fath ʿAlī Shāh’s and ʿAbbās Mīrzā’s intentions in cultivating or tolerating representatives of various European governments was primarily to ease the tremendous pressure exerted on Iran by the agents of the Tsar. *Mutatis mutandis*, MuḤammad Shāh and Ḥājji Mīrzā Āghāsī, bitterly resentful of British blustering and sufficiently shrewd to take Russian assurances of friendship *cum grano salis*, proved no less persistent in their attempts to escape pulverization between these upper and nether millstones by trying to extend Iran’s diplomatic contacts to other European governments, such as those of France, Austria, and even Spain.<sup>41</sup>

The one area in which neither Fath ʿAlī Shāh nor MuḤammad Shāh shied away from working with foreign missions was that of military reform. After the end of the first war with Russia in 1804–13, thoughtful Iranians understood the necessity for confronting the Russians on their terms, and incidentally contributing to improved internal policing, by raising new units, disciplined in the European manner and equipped with the latest European weaponry. ʿAbbās Mīrzā’s enthusiasm for his Nizām-i Jadīd has already been alluded to, but it would be erroneous to suppose that his was a solitary voice crying in the wilderness. Fath ʿAlī Shāh had his own European-officered battalions, in addition to those of the Valī ʿahd, although he was too lethargic to provide the personal supervision which their training demanded. Even MuḤammad ʿAlī Mīrzā, whom European observers described as a “throwback” to the age of Āghā MuḤammad Khān, understood the value of European training and weapons, and maintained a European-officered corps of regular infantry at Kirmānshāh, the equivalent of ʿAbbās Mīrzā’s Nizām-i Jadīd.

Because of the distance from Kirmānshāh to Tehran, and also because of the prince’s secretiveness regarding his military establishment, his efforts in this direction were much less known to European contemporaries than were the

<sup>41</sup> Volodarsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 124–128.



well-publicized activities of ʿAbbās Mīrzā. A policy of deliberate obfuscation may account for the admission by Fraser, usually so well-informed, that “Mahomed Allee Meerza kept up at Kermanshah the most effective military establishment in Persia; but of its extent or organization I am ignorant.”<sup>42</sup> Another English traveller, J.S. Buckingham, who was in Kirmānshāh in 1816, heard that the prince maintained a force of one thousand regular infantry and five hundred regular cavalry there, in addition to being able to call upon the tribal levies of the province in an emergency. He also heard that the prince had in his service a Russian renegade, known as Yūsuf Khān, whom he had appointed as his *Tūpchī-Bāshī* (Commander of Artillery). The versatile Russian, in addition to establishing a park of artillery and strengthening the city’s fortifications, had set up a foundry for casting brass cannon, and a factory for manufacturing gunpowder.<sup>43</sup> Buckingham’s information was more or less confirmed by Sir Robert Ker Porter during a visit to Kirmānshāh two years later. He testified that there were troops there organized on the European model, and spoke of two French officers and an Armenian artificer in connection with artillery and an arsenal.<sup>44</sup> Another example of a prominent figure seeking to apply European methods to the training of his troops was the Vālī of Ardalān, Amān-Allāh Khān (c. 1800–24), as an English visitor to Sanandaj in 1820 recorded in his journal.<sup>45</sup>

This was, no doubt, the application of western technology upon a very small scale, but it had a cumulative effect. Thus, writing of the year 1832, the author of the *Fārsnāma-yi Nāṣirī* noted that an Englishman, the former instructor of a detachment of Qarāgūzlū tribesmen, and an Iranian who had formerly been in the service of ʿAbbās Mīrzā, had both been admitted to the service of the beglerbegī of Fārs, Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā Farmān-farmā, and been given unusually

<sup>42</sup> Fraser, *Khorasan* 1, p. 225.

<sup>43</sup> Buckingham, 1, pp. 177, 180, 193. Rich was presumably referring to Yūsuf Khān when he wrote: “Lately a man in Kermanshah, who practises founding, casting and coining, has greatly contributed to the destruction of the plane forests, fancying that nothing but charcoal made of tchinar [chenār] would answer his purpose”; *Narrative* 1, p. 106.

<sup>44</sup> Porter, 11, p. 181. See Jaubert, p. 280, and Keppel, 1, p. 320. The two French officers mentioned by Porter may have been de Veaux (or de Vaux) and Court, whom Keppel encountered in Kirmānshāh in 1821. Keppel also found two Italian soldiers of fortune and a *soi-disant* Spaniard, “Senor Oms” there. He was told that at one time, Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā, for whom these mercenaries expressed warm praise for his intrepid spirit on the battlefield, had employed seven or eight European officers in his service. Keppel, 11, pp. 14–21. To de Veaux, apparently, was attributed the success of the prince’s advance against Baghdad in 1821: Flandin and Coste, 11, p. 520. Following the death of Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā, several of these European officers in due course made their way to northern India, where they entered the service of Ranjit Singh, the Sikh ruler of the Panjab. There, the mysterious “Senor Oms” met with a premature death, but both Claude August Court (1793–1861) and Paolo di Avitabile (1791–1850) carved out brilliant careers for themselves in the Sikh service. See Grey, pp. 121–2, 148, 163. <sup>45</sup> Rich, 1, p. 216.

high salaries. A year or two later, there was even stranger news to report: the vazīr of Fārs, Mīrzā Ḥasan Niẓām al-ʿUlamā, had persuaded Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā to recruit three battalions of regular troops and have them trained in the European style by a certain Englishman, John Walter. As with ʿAbbās Mīrzā's regulars in Tabrīz, Ḥusain ʿAlī Mīrzā's troops were to parade daily on the *maidān-i tūpkehāna* in Shīrāz, each battalion consisting of 800 men. One battalion consisted of men from Shīrāz, under the command of the beglerbegī's son, Nādir Mīrzā. Another was formed from Qashqāʾī, Bahārlū, Nafar and Arab tribesmen, under the command of Jahāngīr Khān, the son of the Qashqāʾī Īl-Khān. The third was recruited from the districts of Shīrāz, Sarvistān, Fasā, Dārāb and Istahbānāt, and was commanded by Mīrzā ʿAbd-Allah Khān, a kinsman of the author of the *Fārsnāma-yi Nāṣirī*.<sup>46</sup>

Symptomatic of the same preoccupation with European military techniques was the desire expressed to a passing Englishman by Muḥammad Shāh's brother, Bahrām Mīrzā Muʿizz al-Daula, the short-lived beglerbegī of Kirmānshāh, that British officers might be stationed in the city, to be able to train his troops in the style of the Niẓām-i Jadīd.<sup>47</sup> It was apparently in response to this expressed wish of a governor of a strategically important region, that the young Henry Rawlinson was sent to Kirmānshāh in April 1835 at the request of the Shah, to act "as a sort of military adviser and assistant" to his brother.<sup>48</sup> Thus, the earliest concern shown by Iranians for increased knowledge of the West related specifically to warfare and technology, and while it may be true that it is a relatively short step from wanting guns and bayonets to assimilating the more seductive aspects of an alien civilization, for Qājār Iran at least, that still lay in the future. Throughout the lifetimes of both Fath ʿAlī Shāh and Muḥammad Shāh, Iran was still, in almost every respect, a medieval Muslim society largely self-sufficient in most of its material needs as well as in its cultural identity.

<sup>46</sup> Ḥasan-i Fasāʾī, *op. cit.*, pp. 221–2. <sup>47</sup> Fraser, *Koordistan* II, pp. 190–1.

<sup>48</sup> Rawlinson, *A Memoir of Major-General Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson*, pp. 55–6. For Rawlinson's experiences in the employment of the beglerbegī of Kirmānshāh, see also H.C. Rawlinson, "Notes on a March from Zohāb", pp. 26–116.

## CHAPTER 5

# IRAN UNDER THE LATER QĀJĀRS, 1848–1922

### THE QĀJĀR POLITICAL SYSTEM

Before discussing the vicissitudes of late Qājār politics, it would be useful to try to understand how 19th century Iranian politics worked. Essentially these workings were only a slight variation on the general pattern of Iranian politics since the 11th century, when large-scale invasions of nomadic Turkish tribes that accompanied the Saljuq incursions, and the spread of the quasi-feudal *iqṭāʿ* system strengthened the regional power of tribal and other military leaders and weakened the strength of central governments. Although there were, between the 11th and 19th centuries, governments of very varied powers, ranging from the strongest of the Saljuq, Mongol and Safavid rulers to periods of complete breakdown of central government, there were certain similarities that characterize the whole of this period. Among these was the status of the numerous nomadic tribes, which ranged from almost total independence to a degree of internal autonomy. Tribes managed not only their own internal affairs, subject generally to tribute and pro-forma confirmation of tribal leaders by the rulers, but also frequently ruled over villagers who inhabited territories in their regions. Beyond this internal autonomy, the tribes constituted the most effective fighting forces in Iran during most of this long period – their mastery of horsemanship and of the latest weapons giving them a decisive advantage over the city population, whom the Shahs generally showed little inclination to train. Every important Iranian dynasty from the Saljuqs to the Qājārs was either tribal in origin or relied on tribal backing in taking power. In the early 19th century, nomadic tribes were estimated to form one third to one half of the Iranian population.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the century estimates were generally one quarter, but since the Iranian population was supposed to have doubled in the interim, from about five million to about ten million persons, the absolute number of tribes people probably remained stationary. The impact of this large, semi-autonomous, and influential tribal grouping on Iranian life and politics has not yet been given the theoretical consideration it deserves.

<sup>1</sup> C. Issawi, *Economic History of Iran*, p. 20; G. Gilbar, "Demographic Developments".

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If tribal leaders, who could call on well armed and generally devoted followers, made up a major element of the Iranian ruling group, there were also other key, often overlapping, elements. In Qājār times the strongest was the court element, headed by the Shah himself, including legions of royal relatives, among whom the Queen Mother and favourite wife or wives might be very influential. Qājārs were often named governors of provinces although they were not exempt from having to purchase these offices. The central and regional treasurers, or *mustaufīs*, tended to be hereditary, using a code and techniques that only they could understand. Otherwise, nearly all offices in the rudimentary central and regional bureaucracy were to some degree bought, and in Qājār times there developed an almost annual auction, with governorships going to the man who offered the most for them, and the governor in turn selling local tax-collecting and other positions.<sup>2</sup> This system, as in many societies, had the advantage of giving to the Shah or governor a fixed amount of ready cash in advance, but had the far greater disadvantage, from the viewpoint of production and prosperity, of encouraging officials to raise as much as they could in taxes since they could not be certain that they could hold their post against a higher bidder the following year. There were exceptions to the yearly bidding, such as the governor-generalship of Āzarbāijān, which the Qājārs gave to the Crown Prince, with real rule often in the hands of a minister. The use of taxes to extort as much as possible from the peasant majority was not significantly abated in such areas, however.

One notable feature of the central bureaucracy was the possibility of rising from humble origins within the royal household to high positions. Prime examples are Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's reforming prime minister, Mīrzā Taqī Khān, the Amīr-i Kabīr, and the long-lived later prime minister, Mīrzā ʿAlī Aṣghar Khān Amīn al-Sulṭān. The father of the first was a steward in the royal household; the father of the latter a butler of Georgian origin who rose to become the Shah's most influential confidant.

If aristocratic blood, in the Western sense, had little meaning in Iran, where titles were usually purchased and were not automatically passed on from father to son, landholding was of major importance in conferring status as well as power. Both the tribal leadership and those in government service tried to get their hands on large amounts of land, and might purchase tax-farming rights for their own lands, which meant that the relatively small body of government officials might never enter their territories. Although no reliable statistics are

<sup>2</sup> R. Shaikhulislami, "The Sale of Offices in Qajar Iran 1856-1896".

available, it seems that most land throughout Qājār times was owned by men who did not work their lands themselves but received rents, mostly in kind, from sharecropping peasants. As the century advanced, more and more merchants purchased land and they, along with some traditional landlords, began to use their lands increasingly for export crops like cotton and opium.<sup>3</sup> Although estates tended to be broken down through the operation of Islamic inheritance laws, which called for the giving of defined shares to varied family members, and through confiscation by the central government, lands could be kept together for the whole family through the creation of a family *vaqf* or mortmain, and sometimes through evasion of Islamic laws. Rich and propertied officials who incurred the displeasure of the Shah might have their property confiscated. Even officials close to the court often had their properties confiscated after their death. Qājār Iran thus provides arguments to suggest extreme upward and downward mobility for a few at the centres of wealth and power, but most were far less mobile, enjoying either continuity of wealth and public office, or, in most cases, poverty and powerlessness. Wealthy merchant families sometimes moved into landholding and even governmental circles.

Government bureaucracy and functions were limited throughout the Qājār period, although they tended to increase in the latter part of that period. The chief function of the bureaucracy was to collect taxes and customs duties, and the chief use made of monies collected was to support the collectors and the provincial and central courts – especially the Shah and his entourage. Public works, such as the building and repair of roads and caravansarais (as had been carried out by some Safavid and other rulers) were not given priority, especially during the late Qājār period. Institutions considered to be the responsibility of government in the modern West, such as schools, hospitals, and most law courts, were mainly left to those with religious training, supported by income from religious gifts and taxes.

Strikingly little attention was given by the Qājār Shahs to the creation of a modern military force which might protect them from both external attack and internal revolt. Recognition of the need for a modern army for self-preservation had launched the modernization programmes of Muḥammad ‘Alī in Egypt and of Selīm III and Maḥmūd II in the Ottoman Empire in the early 19th century. Their new military forces required translation bureaux, sending students

<sup>3</sup> For a full discussion of the commercialization of Iranian agriculture, see V.F. Nowshirvani, “The Beginnings of Commercialized Agriculture in Iran”; G. Gilbar, “The Big Merchants (*tujjar*) and the Constitutional Movement of 1906”; and R.T. Olson, “Persian Gulf Trade and the Agricultural Economy of Southern Iran in the Nineteenth Century”.

abroad, building modern schools at home, and beginning factories to meet the needs of the armed forces. In Iran, however, after the death of Crown Prince ʿAbbās Mīrzā in 1833, there were only sporadic attempts to bring in Western military instructors from various countries to train sections of the armed forces, and only the Russian-officered Cossack Brigade, later in the century, became a serious and disciplined force, though a small one. Otherwise the Iranian army was noted for its almost total disorganization, and for the sale of office to incompetents who appropriated their men's salaries and in return allowed the men to make a living by whatever trade they could, and neglected their drill and training. Apart from the Cossack Brigade, the government mainly relied on tribal forces that were not part of the regular army and which were mobilized by the promise of freedom to loot and plunder.

Several explanations can be suggested for the Qājārs' lack of success in building an effective military force. Iran was not in contact with the West as early and intensively as were Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, and forces opposing centralization were also stronger within Iran. Tribal leaders, the ʿulamā and vested interests at court effectively blocked reformist measures for different reasons. Moreover, Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh did not feel it necessary to take such measures very seriously and preferred to rely on limited military forces along with a vague British guarantee of Iran's territorial integrity (which he tried unsuccessfully to strengthen).

Lacking a strong army or national police, and lacking roads and railways with which to reach the provinces, the central government had therefore to use largely indirect methods of rule, such as dividing opposing forces, offering bribes in the form of pensions, and holding hostages in the capital for the good behaviour of powerful families and tribes.

In addition to these groups, opposition to the Throne was sometimes forthcoming from the Shīʿī ʿulamā, who are described in more detail elsewhere (see Chapter 19). Many Imāmī (Twelver) Shīʿīs regard temporal rulers as, to some degree, illegitimate – with legitimate power belonging to the Hidden Imām. With Shiʿism there gradually grew up the theory that the *mujtahids* were the most qualified interpreters of the will of the Hidden Imām in many legal and social matters. Hence, if a mujtahid, and particularly the leading mujtahid, should speak out against the practice of a temporal ruler, it was the mujtahid who should be obeyed. In Safavid times this potential conflict remained muted, partly because the Safavids claimed to be descended from an Imām, and also because they maintained considerable control and influence over the religious establishment – but even in late Safavid times there were mujtahids who spoke

out against the rule of wine-drinking, impious Shahs, and claimed that the mujtahids themselves had greater right to rule.<sup>4</sup>

During the eighteenth century, the centre of Shī'ī leadership shifted outside Iran to the Shī'ī shrine cities of Ottoman Iraq, where it could be free of the Shahs' influence and intimidation. There was enough income at the shrines through endowments and donations to support a large community of religious leaders, scholars and students, independent of the Iranian government. Even within Iran, as direct recipients of the Islamic *khums* and *zakāt* tax and of considerable income from pious endowments (*vaqfs*) as well as other income for services rendered, the Shī'ī 'ulamā had considerable independent wealth. Naturally, this wealth was very unequally distributed, and there were poor, middling and rich mullas, some of whom carried on trades or owned much land to supplement their income from their other functions. As a corporate group, the 'ulamā were well funded, and this wealth forwarded their power and independence. In addition to their own sources of income, they were frequently given incomes and pensions by the government. Many of the 'ulamā had close ties with bazaar merchants and artisans. In addition, *lūṭīs* (urban toughs) as well as religious students often acted as their private armies.

Many of the functions that modern states would consider governmental were carried out in Qājār Iran, as in most traditional Muslim societies, by the 'ulamā. Such functions included most educational, judicial and legal work and such social and charitable services as existed. Aside from the technical school, or *Dār al-Funūn*, of Tehran, founded by Mīrzā Taqī Khān Amīr-i Kabīr in 1851 under government auspices, there were other forms of secular education conducted by scribes and tutors, in which the government played no part in determining the curriculum or structure. The curriculum in religious schools was strictly traditional and Islamic. It concentrated at the lower levels on reading, writing, and the memorization of the Qur'ān by rote, and, higher levels, on Arabic and the traditional Islamic sciences. Only near the end of the Qājār period were there a few new initiatives, largely private, to create modern schools, sometimes influenced by earlier, foreign-inspired Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian schools.

The administration of justice was divided between Islamic *sharī'a* courts, run by the 'ulamā, and the courts of *'urf* or "customary law", presided over by the Shah, the governors, and their representatives. Some tribal groups had their

<sup>4</sup> J. Chardin, *Voyages*, pp. 2:207–8; see also, A.K.S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, pp. 278–83.

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own customary law. In general, the sharīʿa courts dealt with family and personal status law, with wills, contracts, and other legal documents, and with breaches of Islamic law, while magistrates' courts concentrated on criminal cases and rebels against the state. In the case of commercial litigation, the parties involved might choose between secular mediators or religious authorities. Throughout the Qājār period there was a tendency for the government to extend the power of its courts and legal prerogatives, which was generally resisted by the ʿulamā.

Entry into the ʿulamā corps, gained through study, was often an avenue of upward social mobility, and entailed more respect than did entry into the Qājār bureaucracy. Mosques and shrines as well as houses of mujtahids, foreign missions and foreign-owned telegraph offices were chief areas of *bast* or refuge from the government.<sup>5</sup> Although some of the ʿulamā, especially the government-appointed *imām jumʿas* of the cities, tended to side with the government, and others might hoard, cheat, extort, or take bribes, in general they were thought to do this less than government officials. Thus, they were sometimes appealed to with success to represent popular grievances against the government. Several times in the Qājār period, and most notably in the protest against the British tobacco concession and in the Constitutional Revolution, an important sector of the ʿulamā became identified with, and some even led, popular movements against the government and against the encroachments of foreign imperialist policies.

In addition to the indigenous and traditional powerholding classes discussed above – the bureaucracy, court, and royal family; the tribal leaders; the landholders; and the ʿulamā – the Qājār period witnessed the growing power of a new, non-indigenous group who profoundly affected Iranian history: the foreigners. Although foreign nationals did not overrun Iran to the same extent as they did Egypt, the Levant, or Turkey, Iran was nearly as much affected as they were by the policies of foreign governments and of a small number of foreign businessmen. Beginning with the strategic involvement of France, Great Britain and Russia with Iran during the Napoleonic Wars, Iran came to be affected particularly by the policies of Great Britain and Russia. In addition to their economic interest in Iranian trade, and later in concessions, Great Britain and Russia had strong political and strategic interests in Iran. The former was concerned to keep control of the Persian Gulf, to keep other powers out of it, and to safeguard southern and eastern Iran for the defence of India. Russia, after

<sup>5</sup> On occasion an entire neighbourhood controlled by a *mujtahid* could be recognized as an area of *bast*. See H. Algar, *Religion and State in Iran*, p. 113.



taking some Transcaucasian territory from Iran in two wars in the early nineteenth century, wished to make northern Iran an area of overwhelming Russian influence, and tried, as did Britain, to be the paramount influence over the Iranian government. There were some in Russia who hoped to gain more territory and an outlet to a warm water port on the Persian Gulf, but neither Power was willing to allow the other extensive territorial gains or the achievement of protectorate status over Iran, let alone the conquest of the whole country. It was this strong mutual desire to stop total control by the other party more than any other factor that was responsible for maintaining Iran's independence. This independence was often purely formal since Iran would not venture to take a step that seriously offended either of the two parties (as the Reuter concession of 1872 offended Russia) unless it believed it had strong support from the other party (and the British did not support Iran in the Reuter affair); even such support was insufficient in many cases, if the other were sufficiently threatening and displeased. The diplomatic files of the Qājār period are filled with discussions by Iran's chief ministers and the Shah with British and Russian representatives, trying to secure their approval of policies that in a truly independent state would be a matter of internal decision. While it is easy for one who reads chiefly British sources to get the impression that British intentions in Iran were reformist and benevolent, a fuller acquaintance with Persian and Russian sources does not bear out this interpretation. On the whole the British desired those reforms that would facilitate trade and the security of foreigners and those connected with them in Iran. When really reforming nationalists appeared, as in the case of the Democratic Party during the Constitutional Revolution, who might have limited the privileges of foreigners in Iran, the British opposed them.

European governments tended to favour, and even aggressively to promote, the trading and commercial interest of their own nationals. Again the difference between Great Britain and Russia in this respect is not as great as it is often presented. It is true that the Russian government offered direct subsidies and rebates to encourage exports to Iran, as to other countries, and also promoted banking and railway schemes, among others, in part as a means of spreading Russian political influence. The British, however, also considered railway schemes mainly from a strategic viewpoint, ultimately deciding to oppose them, as did the Russians, on the same grounds. The British government also played a considerable rôle in encouraging or discouraging investment in particular schemes; discouraging the Reuter concession, but then using Reuter's claim to fight Russia's quest for a railway concession, and encouraging Reuter's final

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compensation in 1889 with the concession for the Imperial Bank of Persia and its attached mineral rights. During his mission to Iran in 1888–90, in particular, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff pushed for a variety of British economic schemes and concessions, such as the opening of the Kārūn river to navigation (the Lynch Brothers who navigated it got a government subsidy), and the disastrous Tobacco Concession of 1890. The D'Arcy Oil Concession of 1901 was similarly negotiated with help from the British legation.<sup>6</sup>

Given the favoured position of Western traders, who, unlike the Persians, did not have to pay internal customs, the impossibility of protecting infant industries or handicrafts due to the enforced low customs duties, and the lack of any serious government policy to help businessmen, Iran became economically heavily dependent on the West. When to this are added Iran's political and military weakness and dependence on Western advice and approval, and the rôle of the Russians and British in protecting the unpopular Qājār dynasty against revolt or rebellion, it seems legitimate to call Iran a semicolony in which the independence of both people and government was strictly limited. Thus to discuss Iranian politics as distinct from Iran's foreign relations is to imply an artificial separation between them. It must be borne in mind that the internal politics discussed below were to a considerable degree controlled not only from behind the scenes, as they are in many countries, but even from beyond Iran's borders.

#### THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE LATER QĀJĀR PERIOD

The middle decades of the 19th century brought promises of change for many Iranians. First came the Bābī messianic movement and revolts which originated in 1844 with Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad, known as the Bāb, a young merchant from Shīrāz who, through reinterpretation of Traditions concerning the Hidden Imām, proclaimed the coming of a "new age" and the Imām's return. The Bāb's radical message attracted enthusiasts from all the urban social classes. Defying the very bases of the religious and political order of their time, the Bābīs were bound to come into open confrontation with those 'ulamā who were in close alliance with the state. The resistance of the Bābīs brought them considerable success, but the movement was eventually suppressed and its members persecuted. The Bāb was executed in 1850 and a turning point was reached in 1852 when a few of his followers tried to assassinate Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh. There

<sup>6</sup> R.W. Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company* 1, pp. 27–47.

followed the brutal torture and execution of many Bābīs including the remarkable woman leader and poet Qurrat al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Ain.<sup>7</sup> After this, many Bābīs left Iran and took refuge in Baghdad. The Bāb had assigned the leadership of the community to Ṣubḥ-i Azal, but in the 1860s the latter's half-brother, Bahā-Allāh, proclaimed himself to be “He whom God shall make manifest” as promised by the Bāb, and claimed to be a new prophet with a new message. This message, which was humanist and pacifist, discouraged the continuation of militancy. His followers, known as Bahāʾīs, advocated moderate social and political reform and later found considerable success within and outside Iran.<sup>8</sup> A militant minority of Bābīs who opposed changes proposed by Bahāʾ-Allāh gave allegiance to Ṣubḥ-i Azal. Several Azalī Bābīs, as the latter group was known, became active in opposition movements such as the Constitutional Revolution, discussed below.

The other promising yet short-lived development, which coincided in time with the Bābī movements, was the reform programme introduced by Mīrzā Taqī Khān *Amīr-i Kabīr* (1848–52). His execution in the Bāgh-i Fīn near Kāshān in 1852 on the Shah's orders, ended the promise of social and political change.<sup>9</sup> The vested interests of these who influenced the young Shah against his ex-prime-minister wanted to preclude him from ever getting power again, and they effectively did so. Even in those intervals when the Shah decided he wanted reform, he was never able to find a minister equally capable. With the dismissal and death of Amīr-i Kabīr nearly all his reforms fell into abeyance; courtiers and <sup>ʿ</sup>ulamā regained their former pensions and privileges, and of his initiatives only the Tehran technical and military school, the Dār al-Funūn, remained. With the help of European teachers it continued to train students from the upper classes in fields of medicine, engineering, military sciences, music and foreign languages and later (in the 1930s) served as one of the foundations for modern higher education in Iran.

The Amīr-i Kabīr's successor as chief minister, Mīrzā Āghā Khān Nūrī, was reactionary and corrupt, and helped reverse the progress of reform. The only notable events of his rule were a quarrel with the British legation over a trivial

<sup>7</sup> An eyewitness account of these events has been written by an Austrian physician. See, E.G. Browne, *Materials for the Study of Bābī Religion*, pp. 266–71. Tehran's first official newspaper *Vaqāyī-i Ittifaqiyya* also reported the Bābī persecutions. These are quoted in M.A. Malik-Khusravi, *Tārīkh-i Shuhadā-yi Amr* III, pp. 129–340. For a history of Bābī-Bahāʾī movement, see E.G. Browne, ed., *The Travellers Narrative*; M. Momen, *The Babi and Bahai Religions, 1844–1944*.

<sup>8</sup> For an outline of reforms proposed by Bahāʾīs, see ʿAbd al-Bahā, *Secret of Divine Civilization*; the work was originally written in 1875.

<sup>9</sup> For various accounts of Amīr-i Kabīr's murder, see J.H. Lorentz, *Modernization and Political Change in Nineteenth Century Iran: The Role of Amīr Kabīr*.

and apparently trumped-up charge, culminating in a temporary break of relations, followed by the Persian siege of Herat and the Anglo-Persian War of 1856–7. The Treaty of Paris of 1857, which terminated the war, made Iran give up all claims to Herat and Afghan territory, but there remained Iranians who hoped to move again into western Afghan territories, which had historically constituted part of Iran.

After Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh dismissed Mīrzā Āghā Khān Nūrī in 1858, strongly criticizing his lax conduct of office, the Shah decided, in view of his problems with his first two chief ministers, to try to rule without a chief minister. Instead, he divided the government among six ministers; Justice, Finance, War, Foreign Affairs, Pensions and *Auqāf* (religious endowments), and the Interior. Each minister was to report personally to the Shah, who alone had the power to issue or approve orders. At the same time, the Shah reinstated an old practice of holding a personal weekly court to hear petitions from the people.

This system proved unsuccessful. The quarrels and attempts at mutual sabotage among the ministers continued, and those outside the privileged six wanted entry into the circle of power. In 1859, the Shah established a wider consultative body, including princes, notables, clerks, *ʿulamā*, and officials. He also proposed similar consultative bodies for the provinces, but not many were created, and neither the central nor the provincial bodies seem to have functioned for long. Later, the Shah set up a smaller central advisory board, but that too was short-lived. For a time the Shah tried to divide all authority among three ministers, but this too was abortive. There are reports of the Shah's disgust at the failure of government to work efficiently and smoothly, and particularly of his dismay at the terrible condition of the armed forces and the army accounts. Although the Shah had access to whatever accounts existed, he lacked the technical knowledge to understand the accounts presented to him and what might be done to improve the collection and allocation of revenue.

One new development that helped the Shahs maintain and extend the power of the central government in the provinces was the construction of the first telegraph lines in Iran, which began in 1858–9. Since the Indian Mutiny of 1857, the British felt the need for telegraphic communication with India, and one of the means they sought to accomplish this was a concession for a line which, after transversing Europe and the Ottoman Empire, would go through Iran to the Persian Gulf and thence by cable to India. The first telegraph concession was granted in 1862 and the single line built soon after; further foreign and local construction resulted in a fairly complete telegraph network linking the major cities to the capital. The Shah could now know immediately what was occurring

in the provinces, and issue orders regarding rebellion or sedition. On the other hand, the opposition found the telegraph a useful tool in co-ordinating their movements in 1891–2 and again in 1905–11.

It may have been frustration at the failure of his central administration to accomplish anything useful between 1851 and 1870 that led Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh to reconsider the possibility of appointing a reforming government under a strong minister. The right man – in many ways the successor to Amīr-i Kabīr – was Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān, son of a high-ranking bureaucrat and grandson of a barber who had entered the service of a Qājār prince.<sup>10</sup> After a successful career in the Iranian foreign service, beginning in India and later serving in Tiflis, Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān was made ambassador to Istanbul during the great Ottoman reform period after 1856. Already predisposed to reform and modernization by his experience in India and Russia, Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān became an even more eager partisan of reform as a result of what he saw in the Ottoman Empire. He seems also to have been influenced by at least two identifiable reformist thinkers – Faṭḥ ‘Alī Ākhūndzāda, whom he got to know well in Tiflis, and the Iranian Armenian, Malkum Khān, whom he met in Istanbul.

Malkum Khān, for all the dubious elements in his life history, was one of the main advocates of reform in 19th-century Iran.<sup>11</sup> Born of an Armenian father who had, at least nominally, converted to Islam, he received his higher education in Paris. Returning to Iran soon after the founding of the Dār al-Funūn, he entered service there as a translator and teacher. He was responsible for setting up the first telegraph line in Iran, from the Dār al-Funūn to the palace. He soon set about founding the first secret society of a Masonic type, though without any official connection with world Free Masonry. This was known as the Farāmūshkhāna or “House of Forgetfulness”, a term referring to the secret nature of this society.<sup>12</sup> The members were mostly of high rank and the Shah was kept informed, so it seems unlikely that anything really seditious was said or done. Malkum Khān, however, had a reputation as a man of advanced ideas, and had even written privately circulated treatises recommending governmental reforms, so that it was probably not hard for interested parties to arouse the Shah’s suspicions. In 1861 the Shah issued a decree closing the Farāmūshkhāna,

<sup>10</sup> Khān Malik Sāsānī, I, p. 59. For details of Ḥusain Khān’s reforms, see Bakhash, *Iran: Monarchy Bureaucracy and Reform* and G. Nashat, *The Origins of Modern Reform in Iran, 1870–1880*. The most detailed Western biography of Ḥusain Khan is unfortunately unpublished: A. Karny, *Mirza Husein Khan Moshir od-Dawle and His Attempts at Reform in Iran 1871–1873* (UCLA Ph.D. dissertation, Los Angeles, 1973).

<sup>11</sup> For a biography of Malkum Khān, see Algar, *Mīrzā Malkum Khān*. For a more sympathetic treatment, see Muḥīṭ Ṭabāṭabā’ī, *Majmū‘-yi Asār-i Mīrzā Malkum Khān*.

<sup>12</sup> Algar, “The Introduction to the History of Freemasonry in Iran”.

and he exiled Malkum, who went to the Ottoman Empire. In Istanbul Malkum was in close contact with Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān, and some of the latter's ideas on restructuring government resemble those set forth by Malkum in his treatises.

Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān was eager to have the Shah travel abroad in order to see the advantages of progress, and the Shah himself was not averse to the idea of such travel, provided he could be sure that those he left behind would remain loyal. Possibly to be politic in his choice of destination for his first foreign trip, rather than from religious devotion, Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh decided to visit, in 1870, the Shī'ī holy cities of Iraq. This happened to be a fortunate choice for the reformist goals of Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān, since the governor of Baghdad province was the famous and effective reformer, Miḥdat Pāshā, who had greatly improved the province during his tenure. At the Shah's request, Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān accompanied him from near the Ottoman border throughout his trip in Ottoman Iraq, and this gave Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān ample opportunity to point out the benefits of reform. The Shah was so impressed with his ambassador that he insisted on his company directly back to Tehran, and did not even give Mīrzā Ḥusain a chance to return to Istanbul to settle his affairs.<sup>13</sup>

Even before their return to Tehran in February 1871, the Shah made Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān Minister of Justice and also Minister of Pensions and Auqāf. He succeeded in putting some rational organization into these ministries, thus alienating some of the <sup>ʿ</sup>ulamā, on whose privileges he encroached. Later in that year he was made Minister of War, and succeeded in making some dramatic improvements in methods of drill and accounting, although he could not bring about the thorough reform the army needed. Finally, in November 1871, the Shah, having tried unsuccessfully to rule without a chief minister since 1858, appointed Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān to this position (*Ṣadr-i Aʿzam*) and announced his support for a programme of reform to overcome the prevalent disorder. Under Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān's inspiration the Shah issued orders regularizing the cabinet, whose members were to be named by the chief minister with the Shah's approval. The cabinet was to meet regularly each week, and all the ministers were responsible to the chief minister, who had to approve the membership of each ministry. Each ministry was to have a regular location – a big change in a country where a ministry might be coterminous with the location of the minister at any given time. The chief minister in fact decided many affairs on his own, getting only formal approval from the Shah. While he was chief minister, Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān remained Minister of War and Commander in Chief, and con-

<sup>13</sup> Karny, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

tinued to try to introduce better order into the armed forces. He made serious efforts to create a rational administration and end corruption in government offices, but he does not seem to have had the political sense to try to build up a party of supporters within Iran, so that, possibly because of his autocratic ways, he alienated even reform-minded court figures like the future Amīn al-Daula. Malkum Khān was invited briefly back to Iran in 1872, possibly to help in the reform programme, but his brief presence before going abroad again had little real effect. Having spent most of his life abroad and as a relatively free agent in the Foreign Service, Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān may have lacked the skills of political manoeuvring that were essential to operating successfully in Iranian conditions. Even with such skills it would have been extremely difficult to cut into the corruption, incompetence, overstaffing, and vested interests that characterized the traditional ways of doing things, without the decisive backing of a firmer ruler than Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh.

The genuine good will toward the common people possessed by Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān was shown during the terrible famine of 1870–1, when it is estimated that as much as one tenth of Iran's population might have died. In addition to taking whatever steps he could to halt the practice of hoarding and speculation by the rich, including members of the court and some ʿulamā, he threw open his own grain stores and tried to persuade the government to subsidize his lower-priced bread. This famine was primarily the result of a series of dry years and bad harvests and conversion of grain land to opium or cotton production for export, as well as of the export of foods for higher prices abroad. Iran was left more vulnerable than before to famine in bad years.<sup>14</sup>

In many ways Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān's prime ministry, only some of the achievements of which are noted above, repeated the experience of the Amīr-i Kabīr. In both cases a reformist chief minister, influenced by what he knew of Russia and the Ottoman Empire, tried to institute reforms of a strictly "self-strengthening" or "reform from above" variety, which would rationalize the centre, encourage economic progress, and strengthen the Shah's government and armed forces. In the course of doing so he antagonized courtiers and ʿulamā without building up a large body of partisans, and he failed to get reliable backing from the Shah. The opposition ultimately succeeded in bringing about his dismissal.

There was, however, one major difference between the two. Whereas the Amīr-i Kabīr had understood the importance for Iran's independent develop-

<sup>14</sup> Karny, *op. cit.*, pp. 283–85.

ment of cutting down dependency on, and ties to, both Great Britain and Russia, and acted accordingly, Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān, even before he became chief minister, believed that it was important to enlist Great Britain as heavily as possible in Iran's protection and development. Without necessarily endorsing his position, it is important to understand how he came to hold it. In the 1860s Russia had swept across Central Asia until it had bordered Iran to the northeast as well as to the northwest. It was not clear if Russia had further territorial designs on Iran. Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān, like many other Iranian leaders, tried fruitlessly to get a clear guarantee of Iran's territorial integrity and independence from Britain. Also, in viewing Iran's undeveloped economy, Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān was attracted by the idea of trying to raise British capital for railway construction and other economic projects, since he regarded Russian capital as dangerous and other countries were less interested in such investments. Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān thus encouraged the grandiose concession negotiated between the Iranian minister in London and Baron Julius de Reuter, a naturalized British subject of news agency fame. Both during negotiations and in later attempts to get work started, Reuter gave bribes to high officials, including Malkum Khān, but there is no evidence that Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān took a bribe. He was, nevertheless, a strong partisan of the concession and helped persuade the Shah to sign it in 1872.

The sweeping Reuter Concession, which even an imperialist like Curzon later characterized as the most complete grant ever made of control over its resources by any country to a foreigner,<sup>15</sup> is indeed without historical parallel. Although the key point both for Reuter and the Iranians was the grant of the right to build a railway from the Caspian ports southward, the Concession also included total rights for all factories, minerals (except those then being exploited), irrigation works, agricultural improvements, new forms of transport, and virtually any form of modernized enterprise that might be undertaken in Iran. While it is true that no resource was ceded that was currently being exploited by Iranians, the foreclosure of future Iranian exploitation, as well as the concentration of such potential economic control over the country in the hands of one foreigner, constituted a serious threat to Iran's economic and political independence. Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān's belief that Iran's independence and economic development would best be forwarded by the unification of all schemes under the aegis of a British subject was sincere, but naïve in terms of the realities of international political and economic life.

<sup>15</sup> Curzon, *Persia* I, p. 480.



In 1872 Reuter sent a representative to Iran to finish the negotiations, and began to press for the help and permits needed to start railway construction. According to the Concession, Reuter had to put up £40,000 in caution money, and this would be forfeited if railway construction were not started by a given date. Throughout 1872 the Iranians procrastinated – partly because of high level opposition to the Concession, partly because Malkum Khān and others wanted further bribes, and partly because railway rights had previously been granted to another party and did not expire until the end of 1872. Even in 1873, however, Iranian obstacles to Reuter's beginning construction were not removed, but rather increased as Iranian opposition to the project grew, and was joined by that of the Russians.

Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh had apparently been toying for several years with the idea of a trip to Europe. No previous Qājār monarch had travelled outside Iranian territory, and the success of his trip to Ottoman Iraq may have encouraged the Shah to believe that he could safely and beneficially travel further afield. Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān strongly encouraged the idea of such a trip, as he felt that if the Shah saw Europe's progress at first hand he would become a firmer promoter of progressive measures at home. Leaving the affairs of Iran in the hands of picked royal relatives and courtiers, the Shah embarked on his trip abroad in 1873 – accompanied by various ministers, courtiers and women of the harem, including his favourite wife, Anīs al-Daula. The Shah's desire to travel with women created considerable problems, since the royal wives were, when in Iran, guarded not only by the all-enveloping costume worn by upper-class urban women, but by guards who forced persons on the street to move back or look away when they passed. No such treatment was possible abroad, and embarrassment was created when Russian officials tried to greet or otherwise deal with these women, while their heavily-covered figures occasioned stares and unwelcome approaches. On ministerial advice, the Shah decided to send the women home from Russia, and although Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān maintained that he had given no advice about this, Anīs al-Daula blamed him and became one of his most bitter and influential opponents. On her return, her palace became the centre of high level opposition to Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān – opposition that included both corrupt or reactionary elements whose vested interests were hurt by Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān's reforms and patriots whose opposition had been aroused by the Reuter Concession, as well as some with mixed motives. Many ʿulamā feared the railway and the influx of foreigners that threatened to follow from the Reuter Concession. A false text of the Concession was circulated which said that Reuter's railway would pass through the shrine of Shāhzāda ʿAbd al-ʿAzīm near

Tehran, which would be demolished – thus further arousing religious sentiment.

The Shah's 1873 European journey may be considered a failure, especially for the hopes of Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān, who had failed to anticipate the strongly hostile attitude of the Russian authorities towards the Reuter Concession. His hopes that this opposition would be overcome by official British support were also dashed. British Foreign Office officials were inclined to despise Reuter as a foreigner and a Jew, and doubted the wisdom of a concession so calculated to arouse Russian hostility.<sup>16</sup> Without British government support and in the face of Russia's hostility, private British financial backing, which was needed for significant economic projects to be carried out, also fell away.

Worse was in store, however. When the royal party landed at Anzalī on the Caspian, in September 1873, a coalition of notables and ʿulamā demanded the dismissal of Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān. The threat of hostile action was so strong that the Shah had to give in, despite his own continued trust in his chief minister, whom he now appointed governor of Gīlān province. The Shah continued to write to him secretly that he would try to return him to Tehran as soon as possible, and he succeeded in bringing Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān back as Minister of War in 1874. He was never again strong enough to attempt wholesale reform, however.

Meanwhile, Iranian procrastination over Reuter's railway continued, and the strength of opposition to the scheme became clear. Although Reuter tried to start laying track in time to avoid forfeiting his caution money, his efforts were blocked and the Shah was able to cancel the Concession on the ostensible grounds that Reuter had failed to meet its terms. The Iranian government kept the caution money, and Reuter appealed for redress to the British Foreign Office. Although the Foreign Office had not hitherto shown any interest in helping Reuter, it soon came to see his claim as an effective weapon against Russian railway concession schemes which, London maintained, could not be granted as long as Reuter had a just claim.<sup>17</sup>

The story of the movement against the Reuter concession presents in embryo some of the features of later Iranian oppositional movements: a heterogeneous coalition of notables, ʿulamā, and common people, some primarily opposing Western or infidel innovations, some patriotic or progressive, and some simply self-interested or influenced by Russia, united against a move that they saw as the sale of Iran's resources, and possibly control over the country, to foreign

<sup>16</sup> Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, p. 132.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 134-47.

infidels. What is different about this first movement is not only its smaller size and scope, but also the fact that some prominent reformers like Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān and Malkum Khān were on the side of the foreigner. The opposition was, however, correct in seeing that the dangers to Iranian independence implied by such a large-scale British involvement outweighed any possible benefits.

In the years after 1873, the Shah returned to ruling without a chief minister, experimenting unsuccessfully with various conciliar and cabinet arrangements. For much of this period power was divided between Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān, who added the Foreign Ministry to his post as War Minister, the reactionary Mustaufi al-Mamālik, who was in charge of internal affairs, and the shrewd Āqā Ibrāhīm Amīn al-Sulṭān, who became the Shah's closest confidant. They effectively stopped each other from achieving anything important and Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān's further reforms, such as the provincial council scheme of 1875, were mostly short-lived. Āqā Ibrāhīm, the son of a Christian convert, rose from menial service in the royal household to responsibility for the royal mint, customs, royal treasury, Ministry of Court and several other important offices. Though he had little education and no administrative experience, his shrewdness, his simplistic frugal approach to finance, and his expression of extreme loyalty to the royal household appealed to the Shah. Opposition to Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān at Tehran continued, and in 1880 the Shah transferred him to the governorship of Khurāsān and the Mashhad shrine. There he died in November 1881 – under mysterious circumstances, according to some.<sup>18</sup> The fall of Ḥusain Khān once again demonstrated the Shah's reluctance to pay the political price needed to form an efficient bureaucracy as a first step towards achieving meaningful political and administrative reform.

The 1880s saw the rise to power of the most tenacious and long-lived chief minister of Qājār Iran. Mīrzā ʿAlī Aṣghar Khān Amīn al-Sulṭān was the son of Āqā Ibrāhīm and, when only in his mid-twenties, he took over his father's titles and positions on the latter's death in 1883–4. The younger Amīn al-Sulṭān soon rose to become the Shah's chief minister, with considerable authority. From the beginning Amīn al-Sulṭān was extremely arrogant towards other officials and at times even treated the Shah contemptuously. Yet he was also a clever opportunist with all the political skills in party building that Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān had lacked, plus the supreme skill of knowing what had to be done to keep the Shah happy. He also possessed to perfection the art of telling his listeners what they wished to hear – to Britain he was pro-British, often hamstrung by irresistible Russian pressures; to the Russians the reverse; to liberals a reformer frustrated

<sup>18</sup> Khān Malik Sāsānī, I, p. 92. See also, "Iʿtimād al-Salṭana, Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān", *Khalseh* (Tehran, 1978), p. 111.

by insurmountable opposition; and to conservatives he was the arch conservative. Although often blamed for the generally reactionary and foreign-oriented policies that characterized the years of his power, it seems likely that he mainly carried out the wishes of his royal master, since his principal aim was not to be reformist or reactionary, but simply to stay in power.

Until 1892, Amīn al-Sulṭān followed a generally pro-British policy. During his time in office the issue of foreign concessions again came to the fore. Some concessions were granted in the early 1880s, but the real concession fever began in 1888 when the forceful Sir Henry Drummond Wolff was sent by London as Minister to Iran to strengthen the British position. He energetically advocated economic concessions. Wolff believed that Iran could be made strong enough to resist Russian incursions only through economic concessions which would both develop the country and increase Western European commitment to Iran's future. He had many friends in the financial world, and an unbounded faith in the ability of foreign capitalists to solve the problem of backward countries. He was naïve in not expecting the Russians to react strongly against his programme, and tried to reach an agreement with Russia over Iran at the same time as he pursued policies that the Russians could only oppose. At Wolff's prompting the Shah opened the Kārūn River, in southern Iran, to international navigation in 1888 – a situation that could only be taken advantage of by the British. The Russians objected that they had an agreement with Iran whereby Iran could not give transport concessions without Russian consent, but the Iranian government replied that opening their own river to navigation was not a concession. Wolff also promoted a settlement of Reuter's outstanding claims through a new concession to Reuter for a bank with the exclusive right to issue banknotes, and attached extensive rights in mineral exploitation. This bank, with its headquarters in Tehran and branches in several cities, was soon opened under the somewhat bizarre name for a foreign firm, the Imperial Bank of Persia. The exclusive note-issuing privileges of the bank were a considerable blow to many Persian merchants and moneychangers, who had issued their own form of notes and tried to continue to do so until they were stopped. The competition of the bank was disliked by the same groups, who more than once organized to make large withdrawals of silver to undermine the bank's solvency. The Russians countered these concessions with their own bank concession. The Russian Bank was widely believed to be government supported and did not have to make money and hence could be used even more effectively than the British Bank to make uneconomic loans to prominent persons in order to buy their loyalty. The Russians also received road concessions.

On his trip through Russia in 1878 the Shah had been impressed by the

## IRAN UNDER THE LATER QĀJĀRS, 1848–1922

Russian Cossack forces, and requested Russian officers to command and drill a new Persian Cossack Brigade, which was founded in 1879. This soon became the one well-trained and reliable force in the Persian army (as large as 2,000 men by the 1890s), useful mostly for protecting the Shah and his government. It was also another instrument of Russian influence in Iran. Added to the spate of concessions from 1888 to 1890, it meant that Iran was being increasingly manipulated by Russian and British economic and political pressures.

## PROTEST AND REVOLUTION: 1890–1914

The economic and political dislocations brought by the Western impact included the undermining of many Iranian handicrafts, the turning of workers in the one favoured craft of carpets into wage labourers who often worked for a pittance, the fall of prices of Iranian exports as compared to European imports, and the disastrous fall in the international price of silver, the basis of Iran's currency. These plus the difficulty of being a trader independent of Europeans and the impossibility of setting up protected factories led to growing economic discontent and resentment against European economic rivals. Increasing Western political and financial control of Iran was also resented, and the numerous Iranian traders and workers who travelled to India, Russian Transcaucasia, and Turkey were able to witness reforms and hear liberal or radical ideas that suggested ways that governments could change in form and could undertake modernizing and self-strengthening policies that might help Iran and free the country of foreign control.

In the 1880s and after there were a number of men with official positions who advocated reform. Among the ministers the most important was Amīn al-Daula, who had held a variety of posts, chiefly that of Minister of Posts, and was generally considered a sincere and honest reformer and westernizer who disliked the corruption and foreign dominance he saw around him. Less forceful or powerful than men like Amīr-i Kabīr or Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān (with whom he did not enjoy good relations), he could achieve only little influence in the face of power maintained by Amīn al-Sulṭān. Mīrzā Malkum Khān (1883–1908), discussed above, after his departure from Iran became for years the Minister of Iran to Great Britain, and concentrated his reform activities on promoting a modified Persian script and to writings directed to a small number of élite Iranians.

In 1889 Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh took his third trip to Europe, a trip that was heavily promoted by Wolff, who hoped to further British financial interest in Iran, and succeeded to a great extent. Among the concessions signed by the Shah

was a concession for a lottery in Iran promoted in part by Malkum Khān. After his return to Iran, the Shah was faced with strong opposition to the lottery concession, coming largely from the religious elements who noted that gambling was forbidden by the Koran. The Shah cancelled the concession and so informed Malkum Khān, who hastened to sell the concession for a handsome price before it became known in England that it had been cancelled. This behaviour resulted in Malkum's dismissal from his posts and the stripping of all his titles. This somewhat tarnished but influential reformer now decided either to undermine, or alternatively to blackmail, the Iranian government by producing an oppositional and reformist newspaper, *Qānūn* (law), which was printed in London and smuggled into Iran. Preaching the virtues of a fixed legal system and the evils of arbitrary and corrupt governments, *Qānūn* concentrated its personal attacks on Amīn al-Sultān, and was quite widely read among Iran's élite during the seven years of its existence, until the death of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh. The only other free newspaper at this time, the much older *Akhtar* put out by Iranians in Istanbul, was much milder in its reformism, and hence, unlike *Qānūn*, was less frequently forbidden entry into Iran. Within Iran there were only official journals, the one experience of a freer paper launched with the encouragement of Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān in 1876, the bilingual *La Patrie*, lasted for only one issue, as its French editor called for free and fearless criticism.

Before 1890 most educated westernizing reformers had been rather hostile to the ʿulamā – as witness Amīr-i Kabīr, Mīrzā Ḥusain Khān, Amīn al-Daula, and the Bābī and Bahāʾī reformers. On the other hand, some ʿulamā who felt Western innovation was dangerous to Islam stood out as opponents of the alarming trend towards the selling of Iran's resources to foreigners, and the ʿulamā's virtual inviolability and their ties to the guilds could make even secular reformers recognize them as useful allies in a struggle against foreign control. From 1890 to 1912 and even beyond there were occasions during which some reconciliation existed between the secularist and ʿulamā elements of the opposition. One of the forgers of this alliance, unusual in world history, between religious and radical elements was the internationally travelled Muslim reformer and pan-Islamist, Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, 1839-97.<sup>19</sup> He claimed Afghan birth and upbringing, probably in order to have more influence in the Sunnī world than he could have had as an Iranian who had a Shīʿī education in Iran and in the Shīʿī shrine cities of Iraq. Educated in the rationalist philosophical tradition of

<sup>19</sup> For a detailed biography of al-Afghānī, see Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din "al-Afghani"*, and *idem*, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism*. See also E. Kedourie, *Afghani and 'Abduh*; A. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*; and H. Pakdaman (Nateq), *Djamal-ed-Din Asadabadi*.

Avicenna and later Iranian philosophers, who were far more widely taught in Iran than in the Sunnī Middle East, Afghānī seems also to have been influenced by the philosophically oriented Shaikhī school of Shi'ism. In about 1857–8, he travelled to British India, where he seems to have developed a lifelong hatred of British imperialism. After an unsuccessful attempt in Afghanistan to arouse its rulers against the British in the late 1860s, he travelled to Istanbul, whence he was expelled in 1870 for a “heretical” talk that restated the views of some Muslim philosophers. In Egypt from 1871 to 1879 he helped arouse and educate a group of young men who were prominent in Egypt's national awakening, and after his expulsion by the foreign-influenced khedive Taufiq, he continued his modernist and anti-imperialist writing first in India and then in Paris, where he edited the anti-British and pan-Islamic Arabic newspaper, *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*. After an unsuccessful attempt in London to influence British policy in Egypt and the Sudan, he returned to the south Persian port city of Būshahr, whence he had left before for India, and where he had his books sent from Egypt. He apparently intended only to pick up his books and go to Russia, where his anti-British views had attracted the nationalist publicist Katkov. The Iranian Minister of Press, Iʿtimād al-Salṭana, who had read *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, talked the Shah into inviting Afghānī to Tehran. There he soon offended the Shah, apparently by his violent anti-British proposals, but he began to gather around him a group of Iranian disciples. To them he apparently spoke of the need of uniting religious and nonreligious oppositions to foreign encroachments. Forced by the Shah to leave Iran in 1887, he spent two years in Russia and then rejoined the Shah during his third trip to Europe. He then went to Russia, believing he had a mission from Amīn al-Sulṭān to smooth over Russian hostility regarding concessions to the British, but in Iran Amīn al-Sulṭān denied giving him such a mission and refused to see him. In the summer of 1890 Afghānī heard that the Shah was planning to exile him and forestalled this by taking bast (sanctuary) in the shrine Shāhzāda ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm just south of Tehran. Here he continued to gather disciples to whom he explained such means of organized opposition as the secretly posted and distributed leaflet and the political secret society. His contacts in Iran included his Tehran host, Amīn al-Ẓarb, the largest and wealthiest Persian merchant and master of the mint; Amīn al-Daula; some members of the ʿulamā, notably the ascetic and reformist Shaikh Hādī Najmābādī; and various reformers and ordinary people, such as his devoted servant Mīrzā Rizā Kirmānī. In January 1891, convinced that a leaflet strongly attacking the government for its concessions to foreigners emanated from Afghānī, the Shah sent soldiers who forcibly dragged him from his sanctuary

and sent him on a forced march to the Iraqi border in mid-winter. From Ottoman Iraq, and then from London, where he soon proceeded and joined Malkum Khān, Afghānī continued to write and speak against the Shah and his government, and he left behind a number of disciples, some organized in a secret society, whom he had instructed in political action and agitation.

Discontent over the Shah's concession policy came to a head after he conceded a complete monopoly over the production, sale and export of all Iranian tobacco to a British subject, encouraged by Wolff, in March 1890. The concession was kept a secret for a time, but in late 1890 the newspaper *Akhtar* began a series of articles severely criticizing the concession. The January 1891 leaflet that brought about Afghānī's expulsion attacked the tobacco concession among others, and new critical leaflets were issued by Afghānī's followers in the spring. The tobacco concession brought far more protest than any other because it did not, like the others, deal with spheres that were unexploited, or only slightly exploited, by Iranian businessmen, but rather with a product already widely grown throughout Iran, and profiting many landholders, large and small merchants, shopkeepers and exporters.

Massive protests against the concession began in the spring of 1891, when the tobacco company's agents began to arrive and to post deadlines for the sale of all tobacco to the company. The first major protest, led by a religious leader, came in Shīrāz, and this leader was exiled to Iraq. There he conferred with Afghānī, who now wrote his famous letter to the most important leader of the Shī'ī 'ulamā, Hājji Mīrzā Ḥasan Shīrāzī, asking him to denounce the Shah and his sale of Iran to Europeans. Some writers to the contrary notwithstanding, Shīrāzī did not immediately take any strong action, but he did write privately to the Shah making many of the points that Afghānī had made to him. A dangerously revolutionary movement now broke out in Tabrīz, where the government was forced to suspend the concession operation, and mass, largely merchant- and 'ulamā-led protests spread to Mashhad, Iṣfahān, Tehran and elsewhere. In December 1891, the movement culminated in an incredibly successful nationwide boycott on the sale and use of tobacco, observed even by the Shah's wives and by non-Muslims, which was based on an order either issued by, or more likely, attributed to Shīrāzī, which he subsequently confirmed. The government tried to suppress only the company's internal monopoly, leaving it with an export monopoly, but this proved impossible. A mass demonstration in Tehran culminating in the shooting on an unarmed crowd causing several deaths, followed by even more massive protests, forced the government to cancel the entire concession in early 1892. The affair left the Iranians with their first foreign



debt – £500,000 from the British owned Imperial Bank for exorbitant compensation to the company. The movement was the first successful mass protest in modern Iran, combining ʿulamā, modernists, merchants, and townspeople in a coordinated movement against government policy. The movement's coordination throughout Iran and with the mujtahids of Iraq was facilitated by the existence and heavy use of the telegraph. Although many of the ʿulamā were now bought off by the government and some quiet years followed, the “religious-radical alliance” had shown its potential for changing the course of Iranian policy, and the government did not grant further economic concessions for several years.

The tobacco movement also encouraged the growth of Russian influence at the expense of the British. To preserve his position, Amīn al-Sulṭān felt it necessary to assure the Russians that he would henceforth be oriented towards them, and his later policies bore this out. The British policy of 1888–90, of encouraging economic concessions by the Shah – a policy favoured by Lord Salisbury and the Foreign Office, and pushed with special energy by Wolff – had backfired, as Russian counterconcessions and Russian support against the tobacco concession culminated in an increase in Russian, and not British, influence. Those who, looking only at the years 1888–90, dub the Wolff ministry, which ended in 1890, a success close their eyes to the implicitly anti-British revolt and the rise of Russian influence which were, in fact, the most important international political consequences of that policy, as many contemporaries recognized.<sup>20</sup>

ʿUlamā opposition to the Shah temporarily died down as many ʿulamā were bought off, but attacks on the government from abroad continued. From London, Afghānī contributed strong articles to Malkum's *Qānūn*, and printed a letter sent out to Shīʿī ʿulamā in Iraq and Iran calling on them to depose the Shah. Late in 1892, Afghānī went to Istanbul as a guest of Sultan Abdulhamid, who kept him from publishing further attacks on the Shah, but encouraged him to spread pan-Islamic propaganda among Iranians and other Shīʿīs, calling on them to lend support to the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph. With this aim Afghānī formed an Iranian Shīʿī pan-Islamic circle in Istanbul, two of whose prominent members were Azālī Bābīs who had by now become radical freethinkers – Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī, a writer and editor of *Akhtar*, and his close friend, the poet and teacher Shaikh Aḥmad Rūḥī, also of Kirmān. The circle sent out numerous

<sup>20</sup> The French minister in Tehran, M.R.D. DeBalloy wrote in 1891 referring to Wolff: “This man thinks only of making noise and fame for himself.” See Keddie, *Religion and Rebellion in Iran*, pp. 100–1.

letters to the Shīʿī ʿulamā in Iran and elsewhere calling on them to give allegiance to the Sultan-Caliph. The Iranian Embassy complained of this activity, implicitly directed at weakening the authority of the Shah (which helps explain the participation of irreligious anti-Shah radicals in an apparently religious activity). The Ottoman Sultan agreed to the extradition of Rūḥī, Kirmānī, and a third Iranian, Khabīr al-Mulk. While the three were waiting in prison in Trabzon, however, Afghānī intervened for them, and the Sultan agreed not to send them to Iran.

Meanwhile, the devoted Iranian servant and follower of Afghānī, Mīrzā Rizā Kirmānī, who had been imprisoned for years for anti-government activities, arrived to visit Afghānī in Istanbul in 1895. There Afghānī seems to have given him the idea of returning to Iran to kill the Shah.<sup>21</sup> After his return to Iran, Mīrzā Rizā made his way to Shāhzāda ʿAbd al-ʿAzīm, a Shīʿī shrine, at the time that the Shah was planning to visit it in preparation for the celebration of the 50th lunar anniversary of his reign. Mīrzā Rizā pretended to be a petitioner and suddenly shot the Shah on 1 May 1896. Immediately after, he was attacked by a crowd of women present in the shrine and lost an ear before he was saved by Amīn al-Sulṭān. The Shah was whisked away from public view, and his dead body was propped up in a carriage while Amīn al-Sulṭān pretended to carry on a conversation with him – this in order to avoid the disorders and rebellions that often accompanied a change of ruler. The Cossacks were notified to cover Tehran, and disorder was avoided. Further anxiety concerned possible pretensions to the throne by two of the Shah’s powerful sons. Zill al-Sulṭān, the Shah’s oldest living son who was excluded from succession due to his mother’s low birth, had a long history of political power and ambition. Feared and powerful as the oppressive governor of a large group of southern provinces, he had built up a virtual private army of western-trained soldiers that put most of the regular army to shame, and had not hesitated to kill a major Bakhtiyārī chief and put down violently anyone he considered a threat.<sup>22</sup> His ambition to take the throne in place of his weak and sickly half-brother, the Crown Prince Muẓaffar al-Dīn, was well known. Concern was also felt about his young brother, Kāmran Mīrzā Nāʾib al-Salṭana, frequently army chief and/or governor of Tehran, who had the advantage of being on the scene in Tehran. The combination of Amīn al-Sulṭān, the Cossacks, and the clearly expressed support of both Russians and

<sup>21</sup> For a fuller discussion of Mīrzā Rizā’s relations with al-Afghānī, see Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din “al-Afghani”*. For the text of Mīrzā Rizā’s interrogation in which he implicates al-Afghānī, see E.G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, pp. 63–85.

<sup>22</sup> For an autobiography of Zill al-Sulṭān, see Masʿūd Mīrzā Zill al-Sulṭān, *Sarguzasht-i Masʿūdī*.

British for the legitimate heir, however, brought expressions of loyalty to Muẓaffar al-Dīn by both brothers.

Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh was scarcely an illustrious or progressive ruler, but he was a relatively powerful one, under whose rule there were few serious tribal disorders or local revolts. The disorders he faced were more directly political, and he or his advisors had at least the negative virtue of knowing when it was necessary to bend or give in. Unlike his son he did not squander his treasury, and the loan raised to pay compensation to the tobacco company remained his only foreign loan. His interest in reform was sporadic at best, and he sacrificed or crippled the power of his only two serious reforming chief ministers when faced by the opposition of vested interests. In his last years he lost even this much interest in reform – a supposed project for codifying laws after the 1889 European trip came to nothing. Instead, he turned to the consolation of women and of a repulsive boy protégé, and to acquiring as much money and treasure as possible, without spending it for any public purpose. He left no legacy of a state or army machinery that might weather the eventuality he must have known was coming – the rule of a weak and sickly successor.

Not all of Nāṣir al-Dīn's actions had negative results however. His patronage of the arts contributed to innovations in music, painting, and calligraphy. He also took a keen interest in poetry, and even tried his hand at writing poems. Significant literary novelties developed during his reign, many of which originated with court poets. Writers, who became important in political protest before and during the Constitutional period, took important steps towards reforming the archaic character of Persian prose. Increased Western contacts influenced many of these innovations. Several European works were translated. A few modern schools and medical clinics were established, mostly by European missionaries. Other new services included the establishment of the first modern police force in Tehran with the advice of an Austrian officer (1879). City services in Tehran, such as cleaning, paving and lighting streets, collection of refuse and maintenance of public parks got their first impetus towards the end of this period. In addition to these, telegraphs, regular newspapers, and banking and limited insurance services were introduced in Iran for the first time during Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's reign.<sup>23</sup> Postal services also expanded and first postage stamps were circulated (1868). In comparison with countries like Egypt and Ottoman Turkey, however, these changes were limited.

<sup>23</sup> Ḥ. Maḥbūbī Ardakānī, 11 (Tehran, 1978).

Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh's relatively mild nature was shown in his treatment of Mīrzā Rīzā Kirmānī, who was extensively interrogated but not tortured before he was hanged. The Iranian government also demanded from the Ottomans the extradition of Afghānī and of his three followers still jailed in Trabzon. Sultan Abdulhamid still refused to return Afghānī, claiming he was an Afghan and not subject to Iranian jurisdiction. The three unfortunate progressives in Trabzon, however, who had no connection with the Shah's assassination, were extradited, and the cruel new crown prince, Muḥammad ʿAlī Mīrzā, had them summarily executed in Tabrīz. Continued Iranian demands for Afghānī's extradition (Mīrzā Rīzā having said that Afghānī was the only other person involved in the assassination) stopped when Afghānī became extremely ill with cancer, and died in 1897.

Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh's weak character did not prevent him from being open to reformist forces. He allowed the return to activity of a man nicknamed "Rushdiyya" because he had set up a modernized type of "Rushdiyya" higher school on the Ottoman model in Tabrīz, where it met with overwhelming religious hostility. Such schools were now opened for the first time in Tehran. The Shah also dismissed the unpopular Amīn al-Sulṭān and, later, appointed the reformist Amīn al-Daula to be chief minister in August 1897. The Shah, however, had paid off his father's huge harem extravagantly, and now was continuously eager to have money to meet the incessant demands of his own courtiers, many of whom had come with him from Tabrīz and pressed to make up for the years of relatively lean waiting. The Shah's doctors also advised trips to European watering spots, and he wanted money for this too. When Amīn al-Daula was unable to raise a new loan from the British, and when his reformist attempts in law, administration of finance, and education aroused the opposition of ʿulamā and courtiers, he was dismissed and Amīn al-Sulṭān was brought back as premier in 1898. Amīn al-Daula's efforts for fiscal reform and centralization, like similar measures attempted by reforming ministers before him, were frustrated by opposition from court vested-interest groups and some government officials and ʿulamā. His abolition of the *barāt* system (assignment of drafts to be collected from provincial treasuries) made officials dependent for their salaries on the central treasury, which they saw as an ineffective tax collector and an unreliable provider of income. Reorganization of finances also meant a cut in court spending, which affected the entire ruling family including the Shah.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Afẓal al-Mulk, *Afẓal al-Tavārīkh*, pp. 234–5.

One of Amīn al-Daula's projects was to invite in some Belgian customs administrators to reorganize the customs, which had been farmed out region by region, resulting in customs farmers underbidding each other, below the already low 5 % limit, in order to attract trade, and also in farmers collecting far more than they paid in. The Belgian experiment was extended under Amīn al-Sulṭān, and the leader of the Belgians, Naus, was made Minister of Customs. This resulted in an increase in efficiency and collection, but also widespread complaints by Iranian merchants that they were discriminated against in favour of foreigners, particularly the Russians, with whom the Belgians had close relations. The exact validity of these charges is unclear, but it is clear that many Iranian merchants had now to pay more than formerly, and that they blamed this on the Shah, the prime minister, and the presence of foreigners. Naus's influence soon extended far beyond customs, and he became *de facto* Minister of Finance.

In order to pay for the foreign trips recommended by the Shah's doctors, Amīn al-Sulṭān floated two large loans from Russia, in 1900 and 1902. The first loan required Iran to pay off its British debts and not to incur any other debts without Russian consent, while the second one included major economic concessions. The Russians also insisted on a new customs treaty, which was signed in 1902, and gave key Russian goods lower rates than the already low 5 % *ad valorem*. The income gained from the loans and from customs reform was not used productively, and went largely for the three extravagantly expensive trips to Europe which the Shah and his entourage took between 1900 and 1905.

Meanwhile, discontent with the government was becoming organized once again. Secret oppositional societies became active in Tehran and elsewhere, and distributed inflammatory leaflets, called *shabnāmas* (night letters) because of their night-time distribution, against the government in 1900 and 1901. Some members of the societies were afterwards discovered and arrested. A new coalition among some of the leading ʿulamā, courtiers, and secular progressives began to focus on the dismissal of Amīn al-Sulṭān, who was seen as responsible for the alarming growth of loans and concessions to the Russians that were leading to Russian control of Iran. Even the British, alarmed at the growth of Russian influence, gave some money and encouragement to leading members of the ʿulamā in Tehran and in the shrine cities of Iraq to help arouse activity against the Russian-favoured trade agreement. This opposition movement also called for the removal of Belgian customs officials and closure of newly established modern schools. These agitations were accompanied by an outburst of anti-foreign and anti-minority feelings in a few cities, instigated by some of the ʿulamā. Chief among these were the anti-Bahāʾī riots of the summer of 1903

which led to the killing of dozens of Bahā'īs in Iṣfahān and Yazd. The Bahā'īs were easier scapegoats than the foreign subjects residing in Iran.<sup>25</sup>

Although unable to stop the 1902 loan from Russia as they had tried, the opposition became menacing enough to help force the dismissal of Amīn al-Sulṭān (now adorned with the higher title of *Atābak*) in September 1903. A decree execrating the Atābak as an unbeliever attributed to the leading Shī'ī 'ulamā of Iraq was widely circulated and believed, although doubts were cast on its authenticity.<sup>26</sup>

The Shah now appointed a reactionary relative of his, 'Ain al-Daula, as premier, but popular protests against the Belgian customs officials and against high prices continued. Secret societies grew, and some helped to educate their members by reading and disseminating critical literature about Iran written in Persian abroad. This literature formed the basis for the ideological awakening of many Iranians who had not travelled abroad or received modern education. It included the works of men of Persian Āzarbāijānī origin living in Russian Transcaucasia, such as Fath 'Alī Akhundov, whose father had migrated from Iranian Āzarbāijān. His anonymous *Kamāl al-Daula va Jalāl al-Daula*, a collection of fictitious epistles describing conditions in Iran, was bitterly critical. A similar series of Persian letters was imitated by Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī, who also wrote other books and articles critical of Iranian conditions. Also widely read were the educational works of Talibov, an Āzarbāijānī émigré to Transcaucasia, and especially the “Travelbook of Ibrahim Beg” by Zain al-'Ābidīn Marāgha'ī, a book of fictitious travels in Iran that mercilessly exposed the evils of Iranian society. Less known, but not without influence, were other critical works, such as the translation of James Morier's *Hajji Baba of Isfahan* by Mīrzā Ḥabīb Iṣfahānī, which added sharpness and a more contemporary flavour of criticism to the original. The “True Dream” by the progressive preachers from Iṣfahān, Jamāl al-Dīn Iṣfahānī and Malik al-Mutakallimīn, criticized under false names such high ranking 'ulamā as the notorious Āqā Najafī, who used their position to add to their wealth and power, and corrupt governors such as Zill al-Sulṭān.<sup>27</sup> Such fiction reinforced the impression created by the reformist political writings of Malkum Khān and others, and by the newspapers published abroad and sent into Iran (with greater freedom under Muẓaffar al-Dīn than under

<sup>25</sup> Kazemzadeh, *op. cit.*, pp. 454–7. See also Keddie, “Iranian Politics 1900–1905: Background to Revolution-II”.

<sup>26</sup> Kasravi, *Tārīkh-i Masbrūṭa-yi Īrān*, p. 32.

<sup>27</sup> Excerpts from the *True Dream* are quoted by M.A. Jamalzāda in *Sar-ū Tab-i Yak Karbās* 1, pp. 94–113. (Unfortunately, these excerpts have been omitted in the English translation of this work by W.L. Heston, *Isfahan is Half the World*, Princeton, 1983).

Nāṣir al-Dīn), which were now joined by *Parvarish* and *Surayyā* from Cairo and *Ḥabl al-Matīn* from Calcutta. The legally distributed papers in Iran continued to be only official or semi-official ones.<sup>28</sup>

Some Iranians now began to plan revolutionary action, and revolutionary sentiment was strengthened by the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5 and the Russian Revolution of 1905. Iranians knew that Russia would intervene against any attempt to overthrow or undermine Qājār government, but with the Russian government fully occupied first with war and then with revolution, it was clearly a propitious time to move. In addition, the strength shown by the recently backward Japanese against the dreaded Russians gave people courage, as did the possibility of shaking by revolution such a potent autocracy as that of Russia. The sight of the only Asian constitutional power defeating the only major European nonconstitutional power not only showed formerly weak Asians overcoming the seemingly omnipotent West, but aroused much new interest in Iran as elsewhere in Asia in a constitution as a “secret of strength”.

The Iranian Constitutional Revolution is usually dated from December 1905, when the governor of Tehran bastinadoed a group of sugar merchants for not lowering their raised sugar prices. Merchants were joined by a large group of mullas and tradesmen who then took sanctuary (bast) in the Royal Mosque of Tehran, whence they were dispersed by agents of ʿAin al-Daula with the help of the Imām Jumʿa of Tehran, a leading pro-government cleric. A group of ʿulamā then decided, at the suggestion of the prominent reforming mujtahid, Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī, to retire to the shrine of Shāhzāda ʿAbd al-ʿAzīm, south of Tehran. There they were joined by a crowd of some 2,000 religious students, middle- and low-ranking mullas, merchants and common people. The bast took 25 days and was financed by discontented merchants and rivals of ʿAin al-Daula, including supporters of Amīn al-Sulṭān.<sup>29</sup> The crucial demand was for a representative ʿadālatkhāna (“house of justice”) of which the meaning and composition were not spelled out – perhaps in order to maintain the unity of modernizers and traditional ʿulamā. The Shah dismissed the unpopular governor of Tehran, and in January 1906, agreed to the ʿadālatkhāna, upon which the ʿulamā returned to Tehran and were received with enthusiasm. The Shah and ʿAin al-Daula showed no sign of fulfilling the promise, however, and further agitation against the government by the popular and radical preachers, Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn

<sup>28</sup> For the press before and during the Constitutional period, see F.G. Browne, *Literary History of Persia* iv; *idem*, *Press and Poetry of Persia*; S. Soroudi, “Poets and Revolution: The Impact of Iran’s Constitutional Revolution on the Social and Literary Outlook of the Poets of the Time.” Y. Āryanpūr, *Aḡ Sabā Tā Nīmā*; and S. Ṣadr Hāshimī, *Tārīkh-i Jarāʾid va Majallāt-i Īrān*.

<sup>29</sup> Browne, *Persian Revolution*, p. 113; see also Kasravi *op. cit.* pp. 60–2.

Iṣfahānī and Shaikh Muḥammad Vāʿiz, increased, and provided a potent means of mass political enlightenment in the absence of an open oppositional press. Sayyid Jamāl was expelled from Tehran, and the government ordered Shaikh Muḥammad to be expelled too. On 11 July 1906, confronting a strong popular attempt to keep Shaikh Muḥammad from being expelled, an officer killed a young sayyid. After this a great mass of mullas and some others left Tehran to take bast in Qum, on 20 July 1906, while even greater numbers of merchants and tradesmen, reaching 12,000–14,000, took a week-long bast in the grounds of the British legation in Tehran (British personnel then being in summer quarters in Qulhak), while Tehran business was at a standstill. Inside the legation grounds the protesters were organized according to their guild affiliations, each guild having its own tent and cooking equipment. Revolutionary propaganda was propagated by the preachers present. Now the protestors demanded and finally got not only the dismissal of ʿAin al-Daula, but also a representative assembly or *majlis* – an idea put forth by the constitutionalists. Although not yet demanded by the movement, the word constitution, *maṣbrūṭiyyat*, began to be voiced by the advanced reformers.

At the end of July the Shah dismissed ʿAin al-Daula, and early in August he accepted the *majlis*. The first Majlis (Assembly) was elected by a six-class division of electors that gave far greater representation to the guilds (who comprised mainly middle- and lower-middle-class elements) than they found in subsequent Majlises elected by a one-class system dominated by the landlords and the rich. Tehran, the most politically advanced city aside from Tabriz, got disproportionate representation (60 out of 156 deputies were from Tehran). The first Majlis opened in October 1906, as soon as the Tehran deputies were elected. A committee was assigned to write the Fundamental Law, which the Shah delayed signing until he was mortally ill, in December 1906. A longer Supplementary Fundamental Law was added in 1907, and signed by the new Shah, Muḥammad ʿAlī, in October. These two documents, based largely on the Belgian constitution, formed the core of the Iranian constitution until 1979. These documents were more honoured in the breach than the observance after 1912, and especially after 1925. The clear intent of the constitution was to set up a truly constitutional monarchy in which Majlis approval was required on all important matters, including foreign loans and treaties, and in which ministers would be responsible to the Majlis. Equality before the law and personal rights and freedoms, subject to a few limits, were also guaranteed, despite the protests of the ʿulamā that members of minority religions should not have equal status with those of the state religion, Islam. The Majlis also passed laws guaranteeing



compulsory public education and free press. The ʿulamā opposed these laws as being anti-Islamic. The Majlis quickly showed its patriotism by refusing a new Russian loan and beginning plans for a national bank instead, which, however, ultimately foundered due to lack of capital. Two conservative provisions, for a group of mujtahids to rule on the compatibility of laws with Islam and for a half-appointed upper-house, were not enforced, although the Senate was created on Muḥammad Riżā Shāh's initiative after World War II.

The new freedoms of press and assembly brought about a sudden flourishing of newspapers, which not only carried direct political news and comments, but also published some of the best new poetry and satire. Particularly noteworthy was the *Šūr-i Isrāfīl* with its poems and the brilliant political satire of the young Dihkhudā. Revolutionary societies or *anjumans* were formed throughout Iran, some of them based on older guilds or fraternal groups, which now became actively involved in politics. The term *anjuman* was also used for the city councils, usually elected, which now appeared for the first time in many cities with parliamentary encouragement.

In January 1907, the mild and ineffectual Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh died, and was succeeded by his cruel and autocratic son, Muḥammad ʿAlī Shāh. Although the new Shah had to take an oath to support the constitution, he did not invite any Majlis deputies to his coronation, and he recalled as prime minister the Atābak, who had been travelling abroad since his dismissal in 1903. Since the constitution was not categorical about who really appointed the prime minister, and the Majlis wished to avoid a direct clash with the new Shah, they accepted the appointment despite hostile telegrams from anjumans and internal arguments. Conflicts over the Atābak's return and over the constitution occurred between the conservative party in the Majlis, led by the two prime mujtahids of the revolution, Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabāʾī and the less principled Sayyid ʿAbd-Allāh Bihbahānī, and by liberal officials, and the smaller democratic left, represented especially by the deputies from the progressive city of Tabrīz led by the patriotic young Sayyid Ḥasan Taqīzāda. Tabrīz and its surrounding province of Āzarbāijān made up the advanced body of the revolution. More modernized economically, heavily involved in international trade, and in contact through travel and emigration with the similarly Turkish-speaking areas of Istanbul and Russian Transcaucasia (where many thousands emigrated temporarily or permanently every year, and from whence arms were imported), Tabrīz was uniquely situated to play a vanguard rôle.

The Atābak did not fulfill the Shah's hope that he would get rid of the Majlis, but rather tried to strike a compromise between the Shah and courtiers and the

Majlis conservatives. In so doing, he aroused the distrust of both the autocrats and the radicals. He was assassinated by a member of a radical group on 31 August 1907, but there is convincing evidence that the Shah was also planning his assassination and may even have penetrated the assassin's group.<sup>30</sup> The Shah hoped to use the assassination as an excuse to suppress the revolutionaries, but in fact, it encouraged them and increased their strength and boldness.

On the same date, 31 August 1907, the Anglo-Russian Treaty settling their differences in Tibet, Afghanistan, and Iran was signed. The growth of the German threat encouraged this treaty, which hurt Iranians, who had counted on British help against Russian intervention. The treaty divided Iran into three spheres, with northern and central Iran, including Tehran and Iṣfahān, in the Russian sphere; south-east Iran in the British sphere; and an area in between (ironically including the area where oil was first found in 1908) in the neutral zone. The Iranians were neither consulted on the agreement nor informed as to its terms when it was signed.

After an unsuccessful assassination attempt on the Shah, and an equally unsuccessful coup attempt by the Shah, the Shah executed a successful coup with the help of the Russian-led Cossack Brigade in June 1908. The Majlis was closed and many popular nationalist leaders, especially those of more advanced views, were arrested and executed. The radical preachers, Jamāl al-Dīn Iṣfahānī, caught while trying to flee, Malik al-Mutakallimīn, and the editor of *Ṣūr-i Isrāfīl*, Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khān (the last two had Azalī Bābī ties) were among those killed. Taqīzāda (and some others) found refuge in the British Legation, whence he went abroad for a time. While the rest of the country bowed to royal control, the city of Tabrīz which, exceptionally, had an armed and drilled popular guard, held out against royal forces. The leaders of this popular resistance were brave men of humble origin. One of them, Sattār Khān, had defied the royal order to put up white flags as a sign of surrender to the approaching royal forces, and had instead gone around with his men tearing down white flags, thus initiating the Tabrīz resistance. With the help of his co-leader, Bāqir Khān, Sattār Khān and their men held out for months against an effective siege by royalist troops. When food supplies became critical the Russians sent troops into Tabrīz ostensibly to protect Europeans, but effectively they took over. Many of the popular forces, known alternatively as mujāhids or *fidāʾīs*, both implying self-sacrificing fighters for the faith, left for the nearby Caspian province of Gīlān, where they were joined by a local revolutionary armed force, and together they began a march on

<sup>30</sup> Keddie, "The Assassination of Amin as-Sultan (Atabak-i Aʿzam) 31 August 1907".

Tehran. Meanwhile the Bakhtiyārī tribe, which had several grudges against the Qājārs, and had some leaders who were genuinely liberal and others who wanted to get much of the power of the central government into their own hands, helped to liberate Iṣfahān from royalist forces and began moving northwards toward Tehran. The Bakhtiyārīs and the northern revolutionaries converged on Tehran in July 1909; the Shah took refuge with the Russians and his minor son Aḥmad was made Shah with the Qājār prince, ʿAzud al-Mulk and, later, the conservative Oxford-educated Nāṣir al-Mulk as regents.

In his opposition to the Majlis, Muḥammad ʿAlī Shāh was assisted by a number of high-ranking ʿulamā. Foremost among them were Shaikh Faḡl-Allāh Nūrī, later hanged by Constitutionalists in 1909, and Sayyid Muḥammad Yazdī of the Iraqi shrine cities. These clerics initially saw the movement as an opportunity to increase their political influence and prevent Westernizing reforms. By 1907, when the liberals had gained the upper hand in radicalizing and secularizing the movement, the conservative elements shifted sides and began to oppose the constitution.<sup>31</sup> The second Majlis was elected under a new electoral law calling for a single class of voters, and was marked by differences between what were now considered parties – the Moderates, led by Bihbahānī, who was assassinated by an extremist in 1910, and the new Democratic Party led by men like Taqīzāda, who was forced to leave Iran after Bihbahānī’s assassination, with which he was surely unconnected.

Iran’s chief problem remained finances, with the related problem of re-establishing control over the provinces, many of which were more subject than ever to tribal disorders and robberies, and remitted little of their due taxes. Desiring a foreigner unconnected with the British or the Russians, the Iranians brought a young American expert, Morgan Shuster, to control and reform their finances. Shuster proposed to set up a tax-collecting gendarmerie, and to head it he proposed an officer in the British Indian army, then with the British Legation in Tehran, Major Stokes, who agreed to resign his commission and position. The Russians protested that the Anglo-Russian Agreement meant that they should control any such officials in the north, and convinced the British to support their position. In November 1911, the Russians sent an ultimatum demanding the dismissal of Shuster and the agreement of Iran not to engage foreigners without British and Russian consent. The Majlis rejected the ultimatum, but as Russian troops advanced toward Tehran the more compliant Nāṣir al-Mulk and the “moderate” and heavily Bakhtiyārī cabinet forcibly

<sup>31</sup> Arjomand, “The Ulama’s Traditionalist Opposition to Parliamentarianism: 1907–1909”.

dissolved the second Majlis, accepted the ultimatum, and dismissed Shuster, in December 1911.

These events marked the real end of the revolution, which may be considered a short-term failure, but which left a considerable legacy. In addition to the constitution itself, a series of financial reforms ending feudal grants and regularizing financial practices remained as a legacy, as did a move toward greater civil jurisdiction in the courts, and the Majlis as a guardian against certain foreign encroachments. Another important new feature of the period before and during the revolution was the entry of women into the political arena. Although women had long participated in bread riots, they now staged some political demonstrations, and Tehran had a women's anjuman and a women's newspaper. This trend was to grow significantly after World War I, when several short-lived women's newspapers advocated the need for improvement of the status of women, especially through promotion of education. Women's organizations, however, were often disrupted by conservative *ʿulamā* and others.<sup>32</sup>

Although the constitution was never abrogated, no new Majlis was elected until 1914 and Russian troops continued to occupy northern Iran, while the anjumans were dissolved, the Press was censored and power returned to a conservative cabinet under vigilant British and especially Russian control. Despite the constitution and political awakening that remained as positive achievements, many people reverted to apathy and cynicism when faced by the restoration of foreign and conservative controls.

In 1901, a British subject, D'Arcy, had been granted a concession for oil in all Iran except the five northern provinces – Russian reaction being forestalled by the ruse of presenting the (Persian) text of the concession to the Russian legation at a time when the chief minister knew that the Russians' translator was away. Although the first years' explorations were discouraging, oil was finally struck in the southwest in 1908. In 1912 the British navy converted from coal to oil and in 1914 the British government bought a majority of shares in the company holding the concession.<sup>33</sup> The company backed the virtually autonomous Shaikh Khazʿal, the most powerful Arab leader in Khūzistān province, and also entered into independent relations with the adjacent region, and the British exercised a control in the south quite comparable to that held by Russia in the north. Given their experience with the British and Russians for decades, it was no wonder that many Iranian nationalists and democrats turned to the Germans for support during World War I.

<sup>32</sup> E. Sanasarian, *Women's Rights Movement in Iran*.

<sup>33</sup> For a detailed account of these developments, see Ferrier, *op. cit.*

The coronation of the 17-year-old Aḥmad Shāh in July 1914 took place eight days before the outbreak of World War I. When World War I began, the Iranian government declared its neutrality, but Iran was nonetheless used as a battlefield by four powers, with Turks moving into Āzarbāijān in 1914 after the Russians had to withdraw their troops. Iranians took advantage of the Russian withdrawal to elect the third Majlis late in 1914. It opened in January 1915 and attempted further abortive financial reforms. As part of a secret Anglo-Russian treaty of 1915 promising Russia control of Istanbul and the Straits, the Russians granted the British post-war control of the Iranian neutral zone in addition to the British zone. In 1915 the “German Lawrence”, Wassmuss, organized a tribal revolt in the south against the British. In Tehran the government, pressured by pro-German nationalist deputies, entered secret negotiations with the German envoy for joining the Central Powers in return for guarantees of territorial integrity and military assistance. Meanwhile, the Russians defeated the Turks and reached Qazvīn, 60 miles from Tehran. Fearing a Russian take-over of the capital, the Tehran government decided to move the capital to Iṣfahān in order to receive German support. The Russians prevented this move by threatening to depose the young Shah and to bring back his exiled father Muḥammad ʿAlī.<sup>34</sup> However, a group of pro-German nationalist deputies left Tehran to set up the Committee for National Defence in Qum and thereby managed to dissolve the third Majlis. In face of Russian advances, they had to retreat to Kirmānshāh where they received further financial assistance from Germany to organize tribal forces against the British and the Russians. Once defeated and expelled, many fled to Istanbul and Berlin to carry out pro-Central-Powers propaganda. To counter pro-German activities, the British regained control of the south in 1916 by forming a local military force, the South Persia Rifles, under Sir Percy Sykes, and supplied arms and money to Bakhtiyārī tribes and Arab tribes, the latter under Shaikh Khazʿal.

The war brought devastation, disruption and famine to Iran. This political and economic crisis was exacerbated by an emotionally disturbed and indecisive Shah, constant tribal disturbance, separatist and rebellious movements and foreign intervention. The outcome was a multitude of short-lived cabinets, which helped reduce the authority of the central government to a bare minimum. Popular reformist, secessionist, and revolutionary movements began throughout Iran, bringing political disintegration at the centre. A partially Islamic revolutionary group, the *Jangālīs*, under a local nationalist preacher,

<sup>34</sup> M. Sepehr, *Īrān dar Jang-i Buzurg*, p. 239.

Kūchik Khān, took control of Gīlān province in 1917–18. Revolutionary feeling was encouraged by the February and especially October revolutions in Russia. In June, 1919 the Bolsheviks renounced the unequal loans, treaties and concessions Russia had been granted in Iran, thus gaining in popularity. Adding to disruption and discontent was a terrible famine in 1918–19, which was as usual worsened by hoarders and speculators.

With Russian troops out and the Central Powers beaten, the British were the only important outside military and economic power in Iran. The British, and especially the Foreign Secretary, Curzon, hoped to extend British rule or protectorates over most of the Middle East, and especially in oil rich Iraq and Iran. In 1919, the British negotiated a treaty (signed after large bribes were given to premier Vuṣūq al-Daula and two other ministers), which made Britain the sole supplier of foreign advisors, officers, arms, communications, transport, and loans, and promising a pro-British tariff revision. Involving a loan of two million pounds sterling, the treaty was widely interpreted as meaning a British protectorate.

U.S. and French representatives protested, and Iranians noted that according to their constitution no treaty could be concluded without Majlis ratification; nonetheless, the British began to act as if the treaty were in force, sending financial, military, and administrative missions. Widespread opposition towards the treaty was expressed in demonstrations and newspaper articles. The Democratic Party of Āzarbāijān, under the leadership of Shaikh Muḥammad Khiyābānī, set up self-government in the province and forced the central government's agents to quit Tabrīz. The autonomous provincial government formed by Khiyābānī in Āzarbāijān, came under attack by rebellious tribes and finally came to an end upon his murder by the Cossacks in Tabrīz in September 1920.<sup>35</sup> In Gīlān, Red Army troops landed at Anzālī in the Spring of 1920, to chase out White Russian forces, and there ensued a temporary coalition between Kūchik Khān and the newly formed Communist Party of Iran, a coalition which in June declared a Soviet Socialist Republic, even though no socialist measures were taken.<sup>36</sup> This coalition soon came to an end when the landowning, pro-Islamic Jangalis quarrelled with radical leftists.

The combination of Iranian and foreign opposition to the pro-British cabinet and the Anglo-Persian Treaty of 1919 forced Vuṣūq al-Daula to resign in July

<sup>35</sup> For a fuller discussion of Khiyābānī and other separatist movements, see Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*.

<sup>36</sup> For a full discussion of the Communist Movement in Iran, see Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*.

1920. A moderate nationalist government under Mushīr al-Daula now declared the treaty suspended until foreign troops should quit Iran and the Majlis could debate freely. Although the next premier, the Sipahdār, was pro-British and put British officers in command of the Cossack Brigade, and prepared to submit the 1919 treaty to a newly elected Majlis, he never dared bring the treaty to a vote, and in effect it soon lapsed. The government now suppressed the autonomy movement in Āzarbāijān with the aid of the Cossack Brigade, but there continued to be risings in the provinces. The Gīlān Jangalis extended their rule to neighbouring Māzandarān, but were wracked by disagreement between the Communists and Kūchik Khān.

By early 1921, the British stopped pressing for the 1919 treaty, and some British leaders thought rather of trying to install a strong Iranian government that would guard against revolutions and would bring “law and order” to disrupted Iran. The manuscript diary of Major General Edmund Ironside, then head of a British force in Iran, shows that he consulted with a strong and able colonel in the Cossack Brigade, Rizā Khān, and assured him of benevolent British non-interference in the event of his taking over the government. Ironside failed to get the young, weak Aḥmad Shāh to agree to Rizā Khān’s rule, and a few days later, in February 1921, Rizā Khān’s Cossacks entered Tehran and overthrew the Sipahdār government. A new government was set up after this *coup d’état* with a pro-British but nationalist journalist, Sayyid Żiyā al-Dīn Ṭabāṭabāʾī, as premier, while Rizā Khān was to be the Minister of War. The new government ordered the arrest of some 60 of the members of the ruling élite who were soon released. To meet the democratic and nationalist demands that were widespread in Iran, Sayyid Żiyā promised land reform, national independence, and other reforms, and annulled the Anglo-Persian Treaty. He also completed pending negotiations for an Irano-Soviet Treaty, signed late in February, which renounced all Russian loans, concessions, and special privileges in Iran with the exception of the Russian Caspian Fisheries concession, which had brought the Russians great profits from caviare production since its negotiation in the late nineteenth century. The treaty had an article permitting the Russians to send in troops against the troops of any third power using Iran as a base against Russia. Directed originally against the White Russians and their foreign allies, the article was cited after World War II by the Soviet Union against American troops in northern Iran, although no Russian troops were sent against them. This treaty and the British strategic retreat in the face of the force of nationalist sentiment gave considerable impetus to greater economic and political self-determination for Iran.

Quarrels between Rizā Khān and Sayyid Ziyā forced the latter to resign and to quit Iran for over two decades. Qavām al-Saltāna now became premier, and the fourth Majlis opened in June 1921, but real power was increasingly in the hands of Rizā Khān. Rizā Khān moved to re-establish central control over rebellious areas, especially Gīlān, where, in late 1921, Kūchik Khān expelled the leftists from his government. Such internal discord made it fairly easy for Rizā Khān to send troops and defeat the Jangalis at the end of 1921. The year also saw a revolt among the tribes and others in Khurāsān, where a short-lived provincial government of Khurāsān was formed under the gendarmerie colonel, Muḥammad Taqī Khān Pisyān, with the help of other Democratic Party members. This movement came to an end late in 1921 when Colonel Pisyān was killed fighting tribal insurgents. The post-war popular movements had suffered from geographical and ideological divisions, lack of unified leadership, and the willingness of the British to be forced into a partial retreat in favour of a strong non-radical government. These disunited movements could thus be put down one by one; they had contributed, however, to the nullification of a British protectorate, and had given impetus to the need for a reformist strongman who would bring Iran security and political stability. The new régime adopted some of the modernizing, centralizing, and nationalistic goals of the reformers and revolutionaries without permitting popular participation in government or fundamental economic changes to improve the lives of workers, peasants, and tribespeople. The régime won over many moderate nationalists frightened of revolution and disorder.

Sprung from a very modest family in Māzandarān and having a limited education, Rizā Khān was a self-made man whose successful career and forcefulness in the Cossack Brigade as well as his political skill gave him the background needed to be a man of destiny at a crucial turning point in Iranian history. Rapidly increasing his control over the Iranian government, he first took complete control of the existing armed forces, including the South Persia Rifles and the gendarmerie. In October 1923, he became prime minister and continued to augment his authority. In 1925, he adopted the family name Pahlavī, that of an ancient Iranian language, thus emphasizing pre-Islamic grandeur. Traditional titles were abolished and Iranians were given the opportunity of choosing their own last names.<sup>37</sup> In the same year, Rizā Khān proclaimed himself the new Shah, putting an end to the Qājār dynasty in an act which met little resistance in the Majlis. The dramatic changes that preceded his abdication in 1941 included

<sup>37</sup> Adoption of last names had started in 1918–19 on a voluntary basis; see Hekmat, *Sī Khāṭira az Aṣr-i Farkhunda-yi Pahlavī*, p. 281.



settlement and disarmament of the tribes; introduction of Western clothing and the unveiling of women; the building of state-owned factories, roads, and Iran's first modern railroad; the modernization and expansion of education; civil codes; and the building of modern armed forces and bureaucracy.<sup>38</sup> Yet there was a negative side too; an autocracy made more efficient than ever by the army and modern transport; the forbidding of strikes and opposition movements and writings; the jailing and killing of opponents; and the financing of modernization through repressive taxes on the poor, whose economic status appears to have declined in the period.

The Qājār period was one of very gradual change, occurring largely under the surface, but creating new formations and groups in both economic and political life. The following Pahlavī period was one of far more rapid change in all spheres, in which many of the demands of the middle class were met, but not the demand for popular self-government and economic betterment for the common people. Under Rīzā Shāh Pahlavī two elements among the old ruling classes were very much weakened – the leading ʿulamā and the tribal leaders. The power of the landlords as a class was not broken, however, but became largely merged with that of the army, the court, the bureaucracy and the modern upper bourgeoisie, who formed a new element in Iran's ruling élite. The ineffective policies of Qājār government led ultimately to its downfall in favour of a government which, for all its mixed character, at least introduced long overdue reforms that modernized and strengthened the country.

<sup>38</sup> For a full discussion of reforms undertaken by Rīzā Shāh, see A. Banani, *Modernization of Iran, 1921–1941*. For a critique of this period see H. Katouzian, *Political Economy of Modern Iran 1926–1979*.

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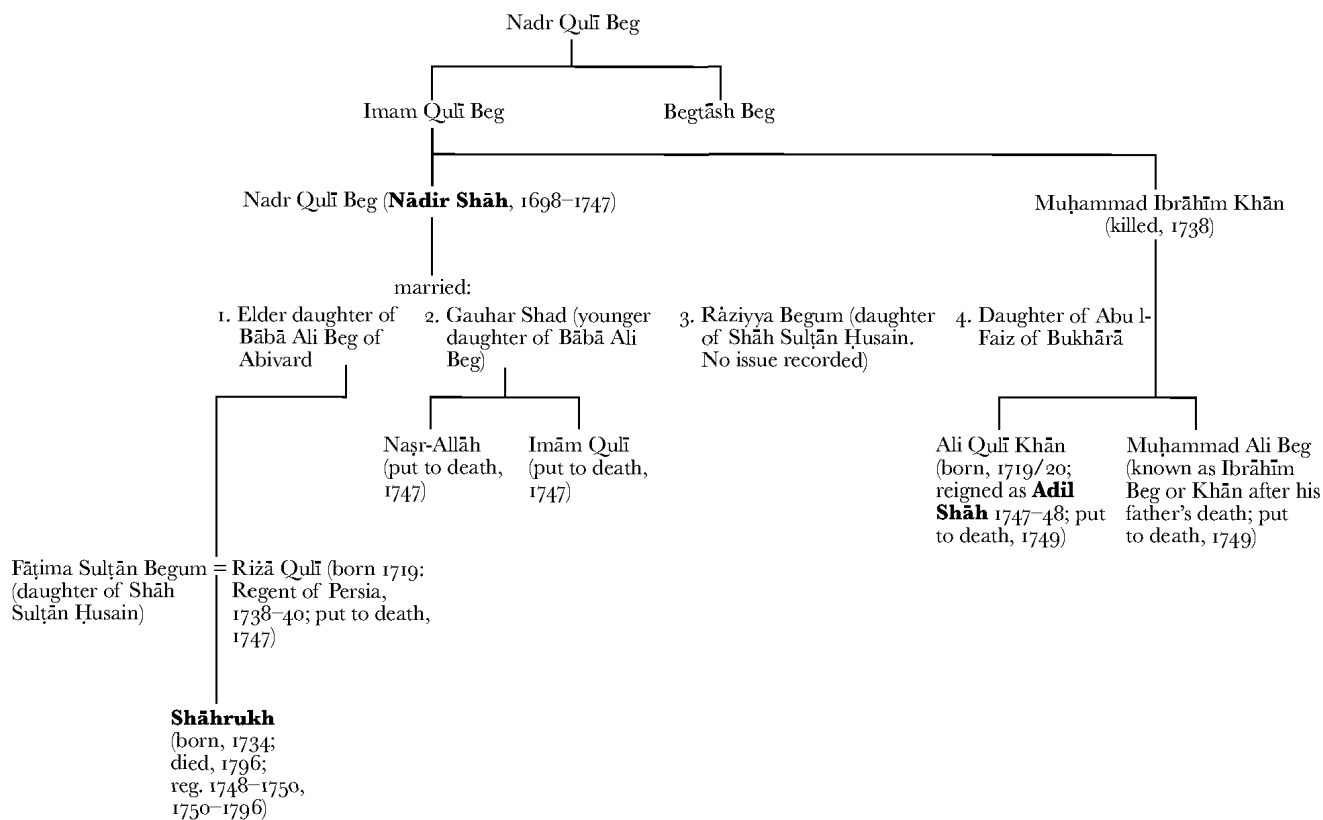
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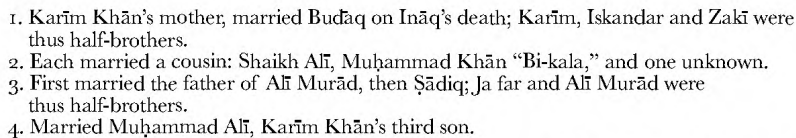
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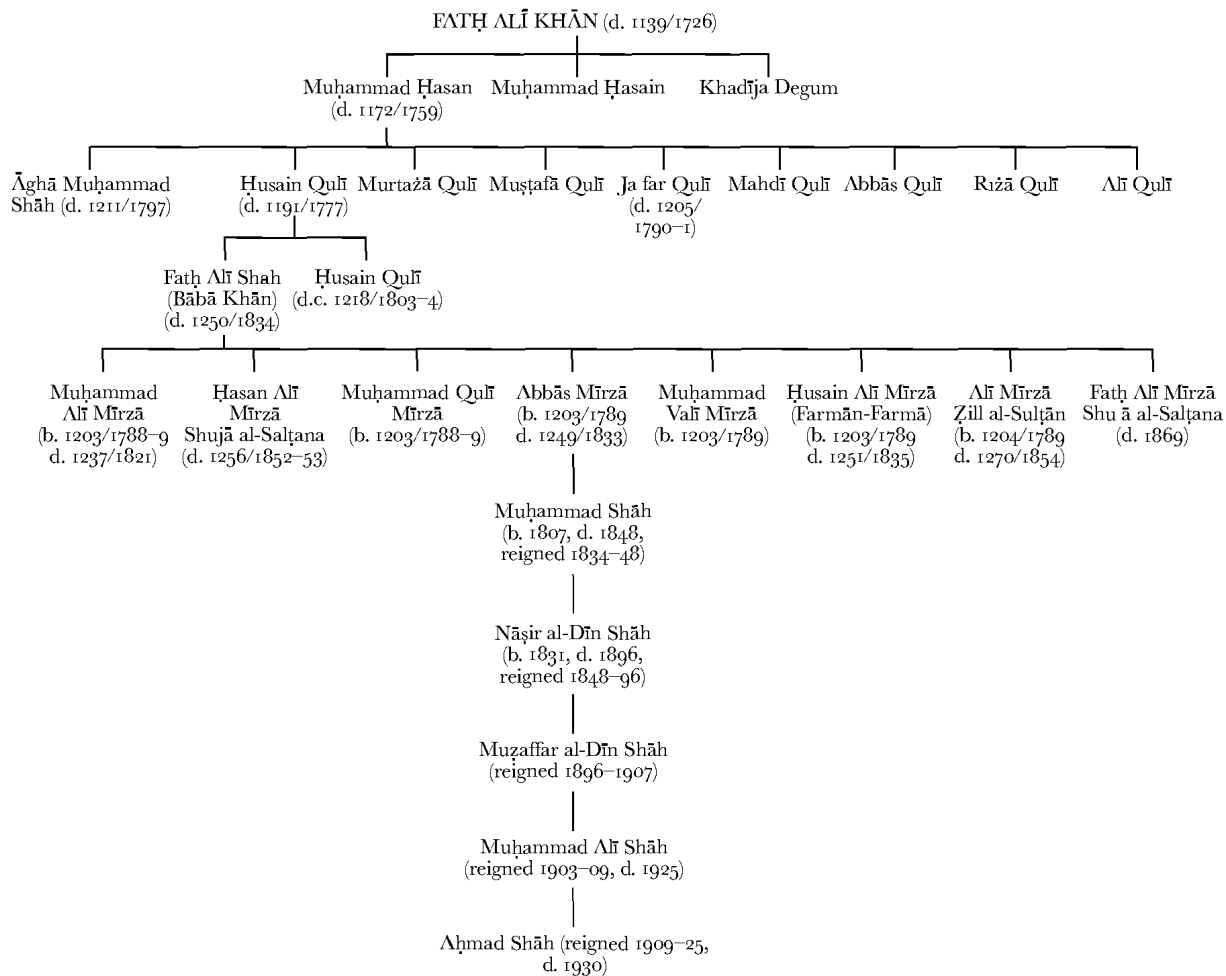
# GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE AFSHĀRS



## ZAND BAGALA



GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE QĀJĀRS RELATED TO  
ĀGHĀ MUḤAMMAD KHĀN\*



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